

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN,

IN THE FORM OF

L E C T U R E S,

INTENDED TO ASSIST THE PRACTICE OF DOMESTIC
INSTRUCTION AND DEVOTION.

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EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

LECTURE I.

IMMEDIATELY after the account given by St. Matthew of the beginning of our Lord's ministry, (iv. 17,) he proceeds to tell us, that Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, after calling Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, "saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee (whose wife was Salome) and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them: and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."

John therefore was with the Lord from the first, and had every opportunity of hearing him. He was one of the three (James his brother and Peter being the others) who were chosen to attend him on many particular occasions: they witnessed, for instance, his agony in the garden, and his transfiguration. He is also distinguished as "the disciple whom Jesus loved:" whom he honoured with his particular confidence: so that, during the last supper, Peter suggests that he should be the person to ask who it was that "should betray him." To him,

too, from the cross, Jesus recommended the care of his surviving mother.

These circumstances give the Gospel of St. John a particular interest. We cannot read it without perceiving that he wrote with a different object from the other three Evangelists. Many secret things, which they had very slightly touched upon, God has been pleased to reveal to us by the pen of St. John. We have much need to pray, and to pray earnestly, that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance.”¹

THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, DECLARED.

JOHN i. 1—3.

1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2. *The same was in the beginning with God.*

3. *All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*

The disciples of Christ had been already furnished, by the other writers of his history, with a sufficient account of his birth, and ministry, and the various circumstances of his life. These had described his miracles, had related his dis-

¹ Eph. i. 17, 18.

LECTURES.

- courses : not all that he did, nor all that he said ; but all that the Holy Spirit knew to be needful, in order that every sincere inquirer might be satisfied with truth, and instructed in doctrine : might possess all things “ that pertain to life and godliness.”

But it still remained to show WHO HE WAS, who had said and done these things. They who believed in him, considered him to be the expected Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. The apostles had from the first perceived and acknowledged this : “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But who, and of what nature, was THE CHRIST ? Was he a created being, like the angel which appeared to Daniel and to Mary ? And in what sense is that term to be understood, THE SON OF GOD ? For even Adam is so called, as having had no earthly father.²

Here, however, St John plainly declares, that He who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was no created being : is not called the Son of God in any ordinary sense ; but was possessed, in his own nature, of all the properties which essentially belong to God. It might have been otherwise, for anything that appears. The Almighty might have endued with such a spirit as Jesus possessed, or with power like that which he displayed, another being who should be born as Jesus was born :—nothing resembling it ever had been seen, but there is nothing incredible in conceiving it ;—and men might have supposed

² “ Enos was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God.” Luke iii, 38.

it, and some probably did suppose it. St. John • here assures us in clear terms that it was not so. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* In the beginning of all things, in the beginning of time, from all eternity—he *was*, he existed, who had now taken upon himself the nature of man. Wherever God was, he was: partaking of the same everlasting, uncreated nature. And therefore he is here described under a new term, *the Word*. That which passes our comprehension, because we have never seen or known the like, must be expressed to us by some term which is familiar to us, and we do understand. And therefore the *Son of God* is here represented as the *Word* of God. The word of a man discloses his thoughts, explains his mind, declares his will. The thoughts, the mind, the will of God and of his “beloved Son,” are one. And accordingly Christ may properly be represented as the *Word* of God. For it is he who makes known to us God’s counsels and purposes, and has been to us as his word.³

• But we are told more still. *All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.* All things were made by him, not independently of the Father, but in union with the Father. We know, from the book of

³ The plainest reason why this essential Son of God is styled *the Word*, seems to be this: that as our words are the interpretation of our mind to others, so was the Son of God sent to reveal his Father’s mind to the world.—*Whitby*.

Genesis, that “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” And we are here informed that in this exercise of his power the agent, the counsellor, was the Son, the Word, “who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.” “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do : for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” And so the apostle understands it : saying to the Ephesians and Hebrews, that “God created all things by Jesus Christ :” “whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds.”⁴

Here we can know nothing, beyond what God reveals to us. Our reason tells us, that there must have been ONE from the beginning, ONE “before all things, and by whom all things consist.” Our reason agrees with the words of the Psalmist, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.” But more than this we know not. We cannot “by searching find out” the nature or person of the Creator : and we can do no more than bow before him, and say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Thou hast created all things for thy pleasure. Yet would any have supposed this, who looked at the state of the world when Jesus came ; who saw the thing made, ignorant of him who made it ; who saw

⁴ Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i, 2.

the creature estranged from his Creator ? He therefore, who had at first formed the earth for the use of man, and man to inhabit it, interposes once more. He who had said at first, "Let us make man after our own image, in our likeness;" now says again, Let us restore man to that image which he has lost, to that likeness which sin has defaced and deformed. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken:" hath spoken unto us by his Son, even by him who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*. And if you hearken to his call, and obey his word, the revelation here made by St. John is the strong foundation of your hope and comfort. He to whom you have fled, he in whom you have sought refuge from the wrath to come, is "God over all, blessed for ever;" and his greatness is your security. He who offers salvation is not, as some pretend, a prophet endowed with authority to reveal God's will, but still a mere man of nature like your own: but is HE who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Why should we deface the scripture, blot out its clearest characters, and write it as it were anew, (as we must, if we endeavour to clear it from the divinity of Christ,) and so make a vain attempt to disprove this truth, this precious and consoling truth? For is there not solid comfort in the thought? True, he is man, with our nature to pity; but then he is also God, with infinite power to save. Such is the ground of the apostle's confidence. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God

that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is now at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

To him then bring your wants, he is merciful to relieve; to him disclose your fears, he is powerful to strengthen; on him lay the burthen of your sins, "he is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him." For he *was in the beginning with God, and was God: and without him was not anything made that was made.*

LECTURE II.

THE WORD DECLARED TO BE THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE SOUL OF MAN.

JOHN i. 4, 5.

4. *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

5. *And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

St. John had before declared that the eternal Word, whose incarnation is the subject of his Gospel, had been one with the Father from the beginning: and that "without him was not anything made that was made." He now adds, *In him was life.* On him life depended, and is by him imparted and communicated. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: so the Son quickeneth whom he will."⁴

⁴ ch. v. 26, 21.

But *the life* here spoken of, is something more than that which was “breathed into man’s nostrils, and he became a living soul.”⁵ *The life was the light of men.* It is the spiritual, and not the natural life which is the light of man. And this life is in the Son, and is by him shed abroad upon the heart. Accordingly, in one of his epistles, this same evangelist describes him as “the Word of life:” (i. 1, 3;) “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of *the Word of life*, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.” And justly is he so termed, who generates in the soul a new existence, springing up to immortality. He is to the soul, what light is to the body of man. If the eye be without light, how great is the darkness! But darker still the soul, without that light which proceeds from the Son of God, and enables it to answer the purposes for which it was created, and endued with understanding.

Some seeds of this divine life, some sparks of this heavenly light, had always been scattered in the world. As it is in nature, before the actual rising of the sun, certain beams of light are visible, and, however inadequate to all our wants, serve many useful purposes: so was it with that spiritual light which had now fully risen. It had long been glimmering in dim and partial rays, before the prophet’s words received their certain accom-

⁵ Gen. ii. 7.

plishment, before it could be said of Jerusalem, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." ³

It was by that earlier light that some of the heathen, wiser than their fellows, and emerging out of the general ignorance, were led to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." As certain of their poets said, "For we are also his offspring." ⁴ Led by this light, they worshipped the powers which they perceived to be above them, though they worshipped they knew not what: so that Paul, as he "passed by and beheld their devotions, found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God." ⁵ And much further would that light have conducted them, if they had not too often quenched it, because they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." ⁶

Still more particularly among the Jewish people *this life was the light of men*. Many had come to the light; had received life, had feared God, and wrought righteousness, "looking for glory, and honour, and immortality." It was by this light that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was by this light that Enoch walked with God: that Abraham obeyed the call of God, and left his country and his kindred, looking for a better habitation, eternal in the heavens. It was by this light that Moses was enabled to look beyond the pleasures of sin for a season, which he might have enjoyed at the court of Pharaoh, and

³ Isa. lx. 1.

⁴ Acts xvii. 27, 28.

⁵ Acts xvii. 23.

⁶ Rom. i. 28.

“esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” It was by this light that many prophets and righteous men, “of whom the world was not worthy, died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”⁷

But still there was too just cause to say, as St. John goes on to add, *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* The law was but “a shadow of good things to come,”⁸ and could not be compared with “the very image of the things,” which had now been manifested to the world. Prophecy was as “a light that shineth in a dark place :”⁹ and even they who uttered it, desired to see the things which were now seen, and had not seen them : “inquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”¹ The vast scheme undertaken by the Son of God, when he came to “give his life a ransom for many,” could be but obscurely perceived and imperfectly understood, before the facts interpreted the predictions. The state of man, in regard to the things of God, in regard to present duties and future prospects, is exactly described in this expressive verse, *The light shineth in darkness,*

⁷ See Hebrews xi. 4, 5, 8, 26, 13.

⁸ Heb. x. 1.

⁹ 2 Peter i. 19.

¹ 1 Peter i. 11.

and the darkness comprehended it not. Certain rays were discovered amid the general gloom, which glimmered, and shed forth a partial light, but did not disperse the darkness. There was not total ignorance, yet there was no clear knowledge.

It is a melancholy thought, that this description too well suits even the present condition of the world, which is now “without excuse.” “The times of that ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”² The dim light, the uncertain knowledge of the Jewish patriarchs, could not be imputed to them as sin. But, alas! what must we now say for the wilful darkness of those who close their eyes against the light, which shines in all its lustre! How does the account here given by St. John of the Redeemer condemn their indifference and apathy! He has himself said, “If I had not come and spoken unto you, ye had not had sin; but now ye have no cloke for your sin.”

He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, undertakes the salvation of mankind; proposes a mighty scheme, determined “from the foundation of the world;” gives intimation beforehand, by the mouth of “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” sends rays of prophetic light as messengers to prepare the way before him, and warn men to be on the watch for the “brightness of his rising.” Till at last “the Sun of righteousness” is fully displayed, “with healing on his wings;” and a voice goes

² Acts xvii. 30.

forth from one end of the earth to the other, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

And well may we expect that this voice should be heard. For observe the certain inference which we must draw from what the Evangelist reveals concerning the Christ, the Son of God. We learn from it the miserable and ruined state of man: so ruined and miserable, that the same power must redeem life, which had given life: the same divine person must create anew, who had at first created. He without whom nothing was made that was made, now comes to seek and to save that which was lost. Low, indeed, was the condition, which must needs be thus relieved and raised. Utter, surely, must be the ruin which could only be thus recovered. O! believe not, then, a deceived and deceitful world, which would tell you that man may be alienated from God, and yet be happy: unreconciled to his Maker and his Judge, and yet safe from danger. If he who comes to save, is he who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*, no other argument is needed to prove the depth of ruin and of misery. We see it in the majesty of the Deliverer. In the greatness of the Saviour we read the greatness of man's necessity. In the vastness of the sacrifice, we learn to calculate the weight of our debt, the burthen of man's sin. And O learn to measure from it, too, the extent of your obligation. Which will be greatest, the heinousness of guilt or the extremity of loss, if we put this mercy from us, "count

ourselves unworthy of eternal life," and "neglect so great salvation?"

Rather, may the gracious purpose which was designed, when "the Word was made flesh," be accomplished in us! "That we may know Him that is true," and "have fellowship with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ!"

LECTURE III.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, A WITNESS OF THE SON OF GOD; WHO WAS REJECTED BY THOSE TO WHOM HE CAME.

JOHN i. 6—11.

(Matt. iii. 1—12. Luke iii. 1—17.)

6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

7. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.*

8. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.*

9. *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

So great an event as the appearance of the Son of God, the incarnation of the Eternal Word, could not take place without announcement. Many prophecies had gone out respecting him; expectation had been raised, even beyond the land in which he

men were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth:"—that "he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." And yet *they received him not*.

The reason was not in him, but in themselves. He came in a particular character. He came as a Saviour. He was announced as such by the angels. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." For this he was promised, predicted, sent; for this he took our nature, ministered, and died; that he might redeem a lost world, and deliver a race which sin had ruined. Now, to receive one who comes in this character, and purports to be such a Saviour, requires a certain state of mind in those who so receive him. To receive one who offers deliverance, implies a sense of danger, a sense of destitution and helplessness. To receive redemption through Christ Jesus, was to acknowledge a state of bondage and condemnation. To receive eternal life as the gift of God for his sake, was to cast themselves on his mercy, to abandon all personal claim, to renounce all procuring merit in themselves.

The Jewish people perceived this; against this their pride and their self-complacency revolted; and for this cause they *received him not*. So St. Paul expressly shows, arguing to the Jews themselves in his epistle to the Romans. They lost, he says, the blessing offered them; they did not *become the sons of God*, because they persisted in trusting to themselves, and refused to rely on Jesus as a Saviour. "They being igno-

norant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."³ The fifth chapter of this Gospel (ver. 39) supplies an example, where we find our Lord reasoning with the Jews around him. "Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Here he addresses them as expecting eternal life, and thinking that they had it in their Scriptures ; but not rightly interpreting the Scriptures, and therefore not having salvation, because they refused it through him who is the author of it. "Ye will not come to ME, that ye might have life." Ye will not come to the fountain, or ye might be cleansed. Ye withdraw yourselves from the physician, or ye might be healed. Ye will not seek the appointed door, or ye might enter in. Thus they maintained their self-dependence. They would not receive salvation "of grace." They did *not receive him*, because of their proud, unhumbléd, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They would not humble themselves, that they might be exalted ; but they would exalt themselves, and therefore they remained abased before God.

But more than this :—Jesus came as a Saviour not only from guilt, but from the power of sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus ; for he shall save his people from their sins." While he invited them

³ Rom. x. 3.

to receive eternal life, he also required them to repent; for “the wages of sin is death;”—to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

And here, again, they stumbled. A deliverer from foreign yoke, a deliverer from Herod or the Romans, they would have gladly followed. But a deliverer from sin had no inducement for them. That yoke they had not felt heavy. They did not grudge the tribute which they paid to Satan.

We meet with an example in the eighth chapter of this Gospel. There our Lord, discoursing in the presence of a large company, said to some who believed on him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This saying offended his hearers. They answer,—“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” They would not understand,—it did not suit them to understand,—that “whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.” They did not understand—nor care to understand—that he alone who could renew the heart in righteousness and true holiness, could make them “free indeed.”

To receive him who required them to be, and who would make them, “poor in spirit,” and “pure in heart,” and lovers of righteousness, and merciful, and meek,—was to lay aside their pride, and their sensuality, and their love of this present world, and their covetousness. And therefore *they received him not*. And this was their condemna-

tion: that light was come into the world; but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. This was their condemnation, that when *He came unto his own, his own received him not*. They rejected him, because of their proud, unhumbled, unsubdued, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They depended on themselves that they were righteous, and “had need of nothing; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”⁴

Let their error be our warning; their loss, our security. Let us learn to feel our own wretchedness, that we may gladly welcome deliverance; let us acknowledge our helplessness, that we may gladly lean on him who is “mighty to save.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

⁴ See Rev. iii. 17.

LECTURE IV.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE
WORD AS SENT OF GOD FOR THEIR SALVA-
TION.

JOHN i. 12, 13.

12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name :*

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

It has been already stated, that when the Son of God came, he did not meet with acceptance. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* It was necessary, in the divine counsels, that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews : but “they put it from them, and counted themselves unworthy of eternal life.” Yet not all. There were those who said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” These opened their eyes to the evidence which proved him to be the Messiah. These neither opposed his doctrines, nor revolted from the redemption which he offered them. They closed with the mercy of God ; they *believed in his name* ; they *received him* ; and, together with him, they received the privilege which he alone can give, the “adoption of children,” and *became the sons of God.*

Became, were made, the sons of God. Were they not so before ?

In one sense, all mankind are the sons of God. So Adam is called by St. Luke,¹ when he is tracing the line from which Joseph was descended. But the whole of the Jewish people were children of God in a higher sense. God sent a message to Pharaoh : (Ex. iv. 22 :) “ Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.” Accordingly Moses addresses the people in Deuteronomy, (xiv. 1,) “ Ye are the children of the Lord your God.” Jesus recognises them as such, distinguishing them from the Gentiles. (Matt. xv. 26.) “ It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” And St. Paul speaks of the privilege enjoyed by his brethren ; (Rom. ix. 4 ;) “ Who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises.”

Yet still we find, that they were capable of, and required, a further and more special adoption. There is a higher privilege, which they could only possess as disciples of Christ Jesus : a privilege which those Jews forfeited, who, when he came, received him not ; and to which those were raised, who did receive him, and believed in his name. *To as many as received him*,—to those who acknowledged the character in which he came, and accepted the redemption which he offered,—to those he assigned the blessings which he alone could give, and which in no other way they could enjoy.

¹ Luke iii. 38.

To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. God's children. "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And justly are they so entitled. It is not a vain and empty term. For, by the adoption given them, they have the provision, and the education, and the inheritance of children.

1. They have the provision of children. As the Father of all, God has provided for the whole race of man. He sends them rain and fruitful seasons: he causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, "on the just and on the unjust." But a very different provision is made for those who belong to the covenant which is in Christ Jesus. They have the assurance that their God shall supply all their wants; that all needful things shall be added to them; for their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need of all these things. "For even the hairs of their head are all numbered."² The circumstances of their lives are so ordered, that all things work together for their good. If they are poor, it shall preserve them from temptation, and keep them humble; if they are rich, it is that they may be "rich in good works." If they are in adversity, it is that they may enjoy a peace which this world cannot give. If they are in prosperity, it is that they may take comfort from the sunshine of God's favour. Rich or poor, afflicted or prosperous, in health or in sickness, in life or in death, "they are the Lord's."

² See Matt. vi. 33. Phil. iv. 19.

2. Together with the provision, they have also the education of children. If they are the sons of God, they are "led by the Spirit of God;"³ and prepared by his grace for the glory which is to follow. He purifies them from the corruption of their natural descent, and renews them after his own image; he withdraws their hearts from things below, and raises them to things above: he uses exactly that discipline which their character most needs, whether gentle or severe: sometimes he chastens them, that they "may bring forth more fruit;" but still he "dealeth with them as sons;" "yea, spareth them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."⁴

3. And in the end they have the inheritance of children. "If they are children, then are they heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."⁵ If they are children, they are the "blessed of the Father," whose "good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom," "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."⁶ We need not know, or desire to know, more of this inheritance, than that it is worthy of the purchase of the blood of Christ; worthy of the promise of God's everlasting covenant. It is an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."⁷

Such are the privileges of those who are made

³ See Rom. viii. 14.

⁴ See John xv. 2. Heb. xii. 7. Mal. iii. 17.

⁵ Rom. viii. 17.

⁶ Matt. xxv. 34. Luke xii. 32.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 4.

the sons of God by faith that is in Christ Jesus. But who shall declare their generation? They *are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* It is not with their *spiritual* as with their *natural* birth: that comes of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man; but the spiritual being cannot be so handed down: God keeps it in his own power. The corruption of Adam descended in natural course to his posterity; but not so the grace of Adam, or of any since born his children: no man can produce it in another by his own means, or secure it for another by his will and desire. It is the gift of God. And though we know it is bestowed according to just and equal laws, we are often foiled and baffled, if we attempt to trace their operation.

Still, we know that, which it is of chief consequence to know. Though this birth is a secret thing, and of a spiritual nature, it is discerned by outward signs. It belongs to those who receive Christ Jesus. *To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.*

Inquire, then, how it is with yourselves. It was shown in the last lecture, why the Jews received him not. When those reasons were pointed out, did your hearts reply, It is not so with us? On the contrary, we desire to be saved, "not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We have "come to him, that we might have life," knowing that without him we were "dead in tres-

passes and sins." We do not complain that "if we are the sons of God," we must be "led by the Spirit of God." The promise is dear to us, that "if we continue in his word, we shall be made free,"—free from the dominion of sin. "Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity" we have received Christ Jesus for what he came to be: our PROPHET, to teach us the will of God; our PRIEST, to make propitiation for our sins; our LORD, to rule and direct our lives.

Blessed are they whose spirit bears witness with them that such is their case and state! And the more blessed, because "flesh and blood" has not put this new heart and right spirit within them, but the Father which is in heaven. If it was of flesh and blood; if it was of the *will of man*, and not of *God*,—it might fail "through their manifold temptations." The corruption which they feel within, tells them it might fail, if it was of themselves. But this is their security;—that it is *not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. And none shall pluck them out of his hand. He that is the author, will be the finisher of their faith. "He that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the end."

LECTURE V.

THE WORD BECAME MAN. HIS GLORY, AS SEEN
BY THE APOSTLES, AND WITNESSED IN THE
WORLD.

JOHN i. 14.

14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

St. John, in the preceding verses, had declared the DIVINITY of the Redeemer. "The Word was God." He now testifies, with the same clearness, a truth which equally concerns us, his HUMANITY. *The Word was made flesh.* He who was God, took upon him the nature of man: the nature of frail mortal flesh. He did not cease to be what he was: he could not cease to be what he had been from eternity; but he became, what he was not before, man as well as God.¹

Let us consider, first, Is this possible?

Why should it not be possible? There seems no reason why the nature which is clothed with flesh should only be such a nature as our own. God, we know, breathed into man the breath of

¹ As defined by the fourth General Council.—"He was so made flesh, that he ceased not to be the Word, never changing that he was, but assuming that he was not."

life, and he became a living soul. That soul might have partaken of his own nature instead of the nature which it has. The mode in which God and man became one, we cannot comprehend; but we need not go beyond ourselves, and the union of soul and body in our own natures, to meet with that which we shall never comprehend; and there is nothing contradictory in believing that as the living soul and body constitute one man, so God and man are one Christ. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Secondly, Does this agree with what had been foretold, and with what the Jewish nation, possessing the oracles of God, had reason to expect?

God had declared to Adam that "the seed" or offspring "of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."² Jesus was the offspring of the woman Mary; and was now manifested to bruise the serpent's head, and to destroy the works of the devil.

Moses had assured the Israelites, that in due time "the Lord their God should raise up unto them of their brethren a prophet like unto himself."³ And now the Word was made flesh, and "born of a woman," among this people.

Isaiah had prophesied concerning a Saviour, in words which could only apply to one who came in fashion as a man, and yet who was in his nature more than man:⁴ whose generation was incompre-

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ Deut. viii. 15. See Acts xiii. 22.

⁴ Compare Isa. vii. and ix.

hensible : whose appearance was frail and humble, yet whose power was divine.

The appearance, therefore, of Christ in the flesh did agree with the expectation raised by prophecy. And then we ask, thirdly, Was there a reason for it? Scripture explains the reason. Jesus came to save sinners, by dying the death of sinners. In the nature of God he could not die. He could not suffer, except in that nature which had sinned. He could only bear the curse of the law in the nature which had incurred the curse by transgression of the law. Forasmuch then as those whom he came to redeem "are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."⁵

Therefore, according to God's power, and according to God's determinate counsel, and for a reason which can be explained to us, "a body was prepared" for the Word:⁶ the Son of God "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,"⁷ and *dwelt among us* in fashion as a man. "Without controversy, great is the mystery; God manifest in the flesh."⁸ Great is the mystery: but how much greater is the mercy!

⁵ Heb. ii. 14—16.

⁶ Heb. x. 5.

⁷ Rom. i. 3.

⁸ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

And now the Evangelist adds, *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* Though he showed himself in the nature and weakness of man, he also showed himself in the glory of Almighty God. That while we can approach and lean upon the one, we may trust in and commit ourselves to the other. St.^o John says, “*We beheld his glory.*” St. John was one of those who enjoyed this privilege in a special degree. He was of that chosen party which attended Jesus on mount Tabor, when “he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”⁹ The intent, surely, of that manifestation was to leave an impression upon the mind of the witnesses, which they should in time transmit to others. St. Peter used it for this purpose, saying, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”¹

Such is the clear assurance left to us from those who spoke what they knew, and testified what they had seen. It has been handed down to us in uninterrupted order by successive generations of Christians. The apostles beheld it. To the different assemblies among which they went,

⁹ Matt. xvii. 1, 2.

¹ 2 Peter 16—18.

“preaching the word,” they related what their “eyes had seen, and their hands had handled, of the Word of life.”² And what was so witnessed and confirmed, the first companies of Christians received as true; and believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God: so that Peter could affirm of them, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”³ These, again, conveyed the word of truth to the generation that came after; the heaven was gradually diffused; the seed became a great tree, with its branches spread on every side, and “its leaves for the healing of the nations.” But as the tree which may have stood for centuries, and which no man living has ever known except as a widely spreading and an ancient tree, was once a seed, and would never have existed at all if that seed had not been dropped into the ground: so with our christian faith. The believers have multiplied; ages have followed ages; nation after nation has been added to the church: and the time seems far back since that church first began to be. Still there was a first seed;—and that seed was planted, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth*, and the apostles beheld his glory.

In one way, that glory has been evidently beheld in every age that has since passed. For, in every age that has since passed, multitudes have been brought, through the preaching of the word,

² 1 John i. 1.

³ 1 Pet. i. 8.

“ from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God :” multitudes have given up their sinful practices and their worldly desires, and have laid them at the foot of the cross, and have “ received the gift of the Holy Ghost,” so as to become “ a peculiar people,” living to the glory of God, and adorning the doctrine of the Saviour. Men “ see their good works,” see “ their light shining ;” and they behold in this a testimony, a glorious evidence of the gospel. A testimony was given which it was impossible to resist, when, as Saul was on his way to Damascus, a light shone suddenly from heaven “ above the brightness of the sun,” and struck the persecutor with blindness. But a few days after was Saul himself a less convincing spectacle, when praying for direction to him whom he had so lately persecuted, and preaching the doctrine which before he destroyed ? ⁴ The voice which came out of the cloud was astonishing, when it said, “ This is my beloved Son, hear him.” But the dying voice of the christian Stephen was equally convincing, when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he knelt down and prayed, “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge !” “ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !” ⁵

These, however, are extraordinary cases. We need not go so far back, we need not appeal to extraordinary interpositions of divine power, to see proofs of the glory of Christ, or to be convinced by the evidence which it supplies. Every member of the fold of Christ bears about him testimony to

⁴ See Acts ix. 3—22.

⁵ Acts vii. 59, 60.

his Shepherd's faithfulness, and truth, and power. I know not what evidence can be stronger. When we see an individual of the Jewish nation, we see an undeniable proof of the truth of the Bible history, and of the prophecies it contains. So, when we behold a true and consistent Christian, we possess the same evidence of all that the gospel says of the mercy of God, the divinity of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. What can be a greater miracle, than one who has his dealings here on earth, and his conversation in heaven: who is dead to the things with which he is daily and hourly conversant, and whose "life is hid with Christ in God?" Surely this is not natural. Especially when we remember the temptations of that world to which he is crucified, and the corruption of that heart which he is subduing, and the rebellious lusts of the flesh which he habitually mortifies.

We have reason to be thankful, that these evidences of the glory of Christ have never failed. We may see them in those around us; nay, we may possess them in ourselves: and let none be satisfied unless he does possess this inward testimony. Every one possesses it, who, through faith in the Son of God, is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and enabled to escape the corruption which is in the world. And God has put this proof within the power of every one; "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;" has it in the consciousness of his heart, and the obedience

of his life. This is a sure record ; and this is the true faith, and eternal life.

I conclude with a single reflection : *The Word was made flesh.* For what purpose ? “ For us men, and for our salvation.” He descended to our nature, that he might exalt us to his. He was made flesh, that we might be raised above the flesh, and become “ partakers of the divine nature.” He became the Son of man, that we might become the sons of God. But to what end, if we still remain carnal, earthly, sensual ? Know ye not that the unrighteous, the unholy, the ungodly, “ shall not inherit the kingdom of God ?” If it could be so, if an unsanctified, unrenewed nature could be admitted to the presence of God and the glory of his power, what need was there that the Word should be made flesh and dwell amongst us ?

Therefore “ cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” “ Mortify your members which are upon the earth :” and “ glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” For “ if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ;” live for ever.

LECTURE VI.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON OF GOD TO SUPPLY ALL THE WANTS OF HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN i. 15, 16.

15. *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me ; for he was before me.*

16. *And of his goodness have we all received, and grace for grace.*

The purpose of John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for him of whom he spake. He of whom he spake was come, and was now ready to enter upon his ministry. John therefore must be superseded, and retire before the presence of Jesus, of whom he was the forerunner : just as the morning star, which shines so brightly until dawn, disappears when the sun rises in the heavens.

And now the evangelist proceeds to describe the benefits of his light ; his blessed influence upon the world. His divine nature, his eternal existence, his omnipotence, had been before declared. "In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God ; and the Word was God." But this might be, and yet no advantage be derived to man. The mine may be rich ; full of gold or precious stones : but what is this, unless the mine is open to us, and we have access to the treasure ?

To the treasure which is laid up in Christ, all who believe in him have access. The apostles had already proved this; and St. John speaks his own experience, when he writes, *of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*¹

It was *from his fulness* that these unlearned and ignorant men received "a mouth and wisdom," which all their "adversaries had not been able to resist."² He supplied their answer to the high priest and elders. It was not in their own strength, which had been proved weakness: but in the might of their Master that they said, (Acts iv. 19,) "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

It was *from his fulness* that they had been enabled to perform works exceeding the power of man: as Peter declared, (Acts iii. 16,) after the healing of the cripple, "His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

It was from the supply of *his fulness* that Paul could dare to say, (1 Cor. i. 4, 5,) "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."

¹ *Χαριν ἀντὶ χάριτος.* A double measure of grace; grace increasing by successive degrees.

² Luke xxi. 15.

Still if this abundant grace had been poured out upon the apostles only, those who believe in Christ "through their word" would read of it with little interest. It would not concern them. But when St. John says, that *of his fulness have all we received*, he speaks in the name of all successive believers. He means that Christ is the fountain from which all may supply their need. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." This is expressed in many ways in Scripture. Sometimes Christ is the stem, which furnishes the sap of life to all his branches. Sometimes he is the stream, which pours forth its perpetual supply.³ Sometimes he is the treasury, in which "it has pleased God that all fulness should dwell:" "in whom are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:"⁴ and these he dispenses by his Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as he will." Thus he recovers them from their lost estate, and repairs the ruins of the fall.

Observe the richness of the treasure, observe the copiousness of the stream. Do we want pardon? There are none who do not need it: but even where it is most urgently needed, *of his fulness* it may be received. He has made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all that believe. Even the malefactor upon the

³ John xv. 4; vii. 37.

⁴ Col. i. 19; ii. 3.

cross was permitted to find that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Do we require knowledge? He is "the light of the world." He has revealed to us all that is most valuable to learn. He has given us an acquaintance with God, an acquaintance with ourselves; he has told us the nature of this world and the nature of the world to come: he has told us on whom God will have mercy, and on whom he will not have mercy: he has abundantly fulfilled the expectation which had gone forth concerning him; "when Messias cometh, which is called Christ, he will tell us all things."^s

Or do we need a power which we have not in ourselves, to subdue our natural sinfulness, to keep down indwelling sin, and to renew the heart after the image of God? He is the source of all spiritual victory: and God would have us trust to the fulness of his strength, that we may receive *grace for grace*, grace in abundant and increasing measure. Thus living upon him in perpetual dependence, the disciples maintain a continued intercourse with their master, the soldiers with their captain, the servants with their Lord.

Here then must be sought whatever is wanted of grace and spiritual knowledge. Independently of Christ Jesus we have nothing: as he himself declares, "Without me ye can do nothing." With him we have everything. As it is written again,

^s John iv. 25.

“He that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit:” and as Paul has left on record, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Let no one boast: for “what hath he which he hath not received?” “Our sufficiency is of Christ.” Let no one despair; for who has ever come to him in penitence and faith, and been cast out, or found his truth to fail?

LECTURE VII.

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED. THE USE OF THE LAW.

JOHN i. 17.

17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

A comparison is here drawn between the first and second dispensation. And the difference is strongly marked by the circumstances attending them.

The law was given by Moscs. Moses was a highly favoured servant of God, selected to communicate his will to the chosen nation. Yet he was a man; one of the fallen race of Adam. *But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* God, having a design

of mercy, sent forth his Son—his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased:—and he, “the mighty Lord,” was proclaimed as “the Prince of peace.”

Again, when Moses was summoned to receive the declaration of God’s purposes, Mount Sinai burned with fire; blackness, and darkness, and tempest surrounded it, and there was heard “the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.”¹ But the *grace and truth* which *came by Jesus Christ*, was characterised by its different announcement. All was condescension in God, and comfort to mankind. “Fear not; I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men.”

Still it was an advantage which we must not undervalue, that *the law was given by Moses* to the Israelites. It was an “advantage, great every way, that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” God did not pass them by: or give them up, like other nations, “to a reprobate mind,” ignorant of him and of his will. They were taught his “statutes and his judgments, which if a man do, he shall continue in them.” And they were many, more than we pretend to number, who were thus led to “do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God,” and to direct

¹ Heb. xii. 18—21.

their lives “ according to the commandments and ordinances of the law.”

What, however, would be the effect of this law of God, if we had no other revelation of his will? What, but to condemn all mankind? As the apostle says, to “ conclude all under sin,” that “ every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God?” This law, whether given to the Israelites by Moses, or repeated by Jesus in his discourses, may all be summed up, as he has himself summed it up, under these two heads: “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.” And who can hold up his hand and affirm, I am guiltless of any transgression against these laws?

If then the terms of the law are such, as to condemn those who transgress it—and such must be the terms of every law — “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them:”—it is clear that “ by the law is the knowledge of sin:” that “ by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified:” and we have eternal reason to be thankful, that *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. The apostle has taught us how to feel and reason: saying, “ The strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is right to be often reflecting upon this: to call to mind, how many things we have done which we ought not to have done: how many things we have left undone that we ought to

have done: and that our only comfort must be, "By grace are ye saved;" "by Jesus Christ all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Thus the law is used by the Spirit to "convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;" becomes "a schoolmaster," a mighty teacher, "to bring us unto Christ:" to awe the transgressor into a thankful acceptance of his mercy. In earthly cases, we often find the criminal hardened in his denial of guilt, confident of escape, sullen, obstinate: but when an unexpected witness appears against him, and his guilt is clearly shown, his spirit fails, his conscience shrinks, and the terror of death subdues, if it does not soften him. The effect of the law upon our hearts should be of a like nature: should be to soften them, now, in time, that we may not at last fall into the hands of an unpropitiated God. It seems to say, why contend and dispute against God? You cannot change him who is unchangeable: you cannot alter his will, which is fixed from everlasting upon the pillars of eternal right: but you may reject his counsel against yourself, (it is but too possible,) you may despise his mercy, and then, too late, experience his anger. Whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, you must submit to die, and stand before God, to be judged by that law which he has ordained. "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!" Repent, and return unto the Lord: there are still the means of peace and reconciliation: *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ: cast*

upon him your burthen, and find rest unto your soul.

Therefore, as the demand of the law is perfect obedience, so the offer of Christ is perfect forgiveness. Perfect obedience no man has paid or can pay. Perfect forgiveness every one may enjoy who seeks to be accepted through the righteousness which is of God by faith. The two covenants have this great distinction. One is command, the other is mercy: mercy which assures us, that though man had transgressed the covenant of command, God had still in store a covenant of grace; that though man had fallen far short of the obedience which God required, God has not altogether cast off his unworthy servants. "Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and while we were yet sinners has reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son."

But here a question meets us, which occurred to St. Paul, when arguing in this same strain. "Wherefore then serveth the law?"² Are we at liberty to disparage it, to neglect it? God forbid. Think not, said our Lord himself, foreseeing what might be alleged, "think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

And there are three uses which the law serves, all which tend to establish the Christian character; there are three considerations which it suggests to the mind, all which we must attentively cherish.

² Gal. iii. 19.

We read the commandments of the law, as Moses gave them to the Israelites. The Lord Jesus enforced them, explained them, extended them, showed that the spirit of them, and not the letter only, must be fulfilled. The apostles still further point out their bearing upon the heart and life.

The first thought should be, This is God's will respecting me. My Saviour kept all these laws perfectly. Not that I might not keep them, but that he might leave me an example as well as an injunction to follow his steps, and walk as he walked. These, then, are to be my rule; and by these I must exercise myself, that I may "keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."

The second thought is of another nature. These are the commands of God. This law is his law—my Maker's law. What could be my hope, if he were to reward me according as I had kept it from my youth up? If that were to be my "righteousness, that I had continued in all the things that are written in the law to do them?" Thanks be to him, who has redeemed me from the curse of the law: whom God has made to me "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

And, lastly, consider within yourselves, Do I keep these commandments? Do I allow myself in the wilful neglect of any of them? Is it my aim, my desire, my prayer, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself? To bring every thought, word, and wish, into captivity to the obedience of Christ: Do I direct my

life by the law, and try myself and judge myself by the law, though I trust not to be “under the law before God?”

This use of the law remains under the Gospel ; and those who most constantly use it for these purposes, are those who understand the gospel best. Whatever, then, your state is, there is use in the law. If you are yet unreconciled to God, the law condemns you. “Agree with thine adversary quickly.” Apply yourself unto Christ, who bore your sins in his own body, that you may find rest unto your soul.

If you have already sought shelter under his cross, still keep your eye upon the law. Look to it, that you may better measure that which is beyond all measure, the goodness of him who has blotted out the record of your transgressions. Look to it also as the rule by which you are to be guided ; the standard by which you are to judge yourself now, and hereafter to be judged : see how far, how very far, you come short of that standard, and be humble.

LECTURE VIII.

WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE OF GOD, IS DERIVED TO US THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST: WHO HAS DECLARED HIS JUSTICE AND HIS MERCY.

JOHN i. 18.

18. *No man hath seen¹ God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

This sentence reminds us of a most important truth. We know nothing of God, nothing which we can depend upon or trust to, except what he has himself revealed. *No man hath seen God at any time.* As it is justly asked in the book of Job, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”²

Yet we often meet with those who argue respecting God and his counsels, as if they *had* seen him, and been admitted to the “secret things which belong to him.” And still more often we find men so acting, so living in the world, as if they knew that he was regardless of either right or wrong, and would make no difference between those who serve him and those who serve him not.

¹ *Seen*, perceived, discovered, and fully understood, either as to his essence or his attributes. *Declared*, revealed, disclosed.

² Job xi. 7.

Now it would be a grievous calamity if there were no help for this ignorance : if, because no man hath seen God, therefore no man, however desirous and piously sincere, could become acquainted with his character and will. His we are, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. We must be sensible of the power which he has over us, whether for good or evil, happiness or misery, if we either turn to the constitution of the body or the soul. Can it, then, be a matter of indifference, a light matter, whether we are the objects of his anger, or his favour ? whether he is reconciled to us, and we are at peace with him ?

Here, then, is the blessing which we receive from that vast event which St. John has been announcing, "God manifest in the flesh : " God revealing himself to us "by his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." *No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Or, as the same truth is expressed in St. Luke, (x. 22,) "No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

The Jewish Scriptures certainly furnish much knowledge of God ; all the knowledge which could be given by description. He is represented as "God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible." He is represented as "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him to a thousand generations." ³

³ Deut. vii. 9.

“ All his ways are judgment : a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”⁴ The Psalms of David abound with great and lofty thoughts concerning the majesty and goodness of God. And the prophets fill up the outline, and describe “ the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are upon the earth,” and to “ look on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word.”⁵

St. John, however, was no stranger to this. He was brought up in the knowledge of it, as belonging to the Jewish nation ; a nation distinguished from the rest of the world, because they had this knowledge ; because they did not “ change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” or suppose that the world was either self-created or had no beginning.

And yet St. John clearly implies in this sentence that the incarnation of *the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared* God to us, as he could not otherwise be declared ; has given us an acquaintance with him which we could not otherwise have enjoyed.

And it is easy to perceive this. Let us trace it in regard to the two attributes with which we are most concerned, his JUSTICE and his MERCY.

1. We are told, plainly told in Scripture, that God “ cannot look upon evil ;” that “ he will by no means clear the guilty.” “ Vengeance is mine, I

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 4.

⁵ Isaiah lxvi. 2.

will repay, saith the Lord." But men invent a thousand reasons, why they should not believe this. *Therefore the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared it.* He declared it, when he was lifted up on the cross to "bear the sins of many:" to "bear our sins in his own body:" to "give his life a ransom:" to "die unto sin:" to show that between sin, and misery as the consequence of sin, there is an inseparable connexion—and that "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" for "the wages of sin is death."

A king, (let us suppose,) an earthly sovereign, has proclaimed to his subjects, that every wilful offender against his law shall die. What irresistible force would be added to his proclamation, if, rather than leave the law unsatisfied, he did not spare his son, his only son! Here, then, the incarnation of the *only begotten Son of God has declared* to us the JUSTICE of the Father with a plainness not to be misunderstood.

2. But God is also revealed to us as "long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And surely the gospel of Christ Jesus has declared this in characters which shine as a sunbeam. There his MERCY is beheld in active exercise: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As the apostle writes, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." *The only*

begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared the Father to us, as planning the wonderful scheme of our redemption ; as testifying his goodness by that "mystery of godliness," which "the angels desire to look into :" as sending out his ambassadors to a rebellious world, that the world may be converted to God : "as having prepared for them that love him" glory which cannot be expressed, and "such good things as pass man's understanding."

Behold, then, the character in which God is revealed to you : He, whom *no man hath seen at any time*, "though he is not far from any of us ;" He with whom you have to do. However boldly men may contend and cavil, you cannot know him, except as he has revealed himself. Behold, as St. Paul says, looking to this very thing—"behold the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."⁶

"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Behold, ye that are penitent and poor in spirit, and rejoice : "yea, again I say unto you, rejoice."

⁶ Rom. xi. 22.

LECTURE IX.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF. HIS BAPTISM.

JOHN i. 19—28.

19. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ?*

20. *And he confessed, and denied not : but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

21. *And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet ? And he answered, No.*

22. *Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself ?*

23. *He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

John had taken upon himself a character of great importance. He had stood forward, and called upon all to consider their ways, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He might expect to be inquired of, *Who art thou ; what sayest thou of thyself ?* Art thou "he that should come to redeem Israel ;" or, art thou Elias,

who, according to the scribes, “must first come?”² *Art thou that prophet?* And he answered, *No*. He was not the Christ. He would not take upon himself the name of Elijah, that great and honoured name, though he was acting “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”³ Nor was he a prophet, commissioned of God to declare things future. But he was one in whom prophecy was accomplished: He was “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”⁴

24. *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.*

25. *And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?*

26. *John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;*

27. *He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

28. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The Evangelist here speaks of BAPTISM, as of a practice familiarly known. And so the question of the Pharisees is not, *why baptizest thou* at all? but *why baptizest thou, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* Yet if the word were not in constant use among ourselves, we should see that it needed explanation. *John was*

² Matt. xvii. 10.

³ Luke i. 17.

⁴ Isaiah xl. 3.

baptizing,—baptizing with water, those who came to him for this purpose, “confessing their sins.” To what end?

The oldest Jewish writers acquaint us that such baptism had been practised as an ordinary rite, when a heathen became a proselyte to the truth revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and turned from his national “vanities to serve the living and true God.” “In all ages,” they say, “when a Gentile is willing to enter into the covenant, and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon him the yoke of the law, he must be circumcised, and *baptized*, and bring a sacrifice.”⁵ Certain rules were observed, both of time and place. It was done—not on the sabbath, not by night—at a confluence of waters, with two or three reputable persons as witnesses.

The meaning must have been this:—The convert had been polluted by idolatry, and all its attendant wickedness. From this he must be purified. And the water with which he was sprinkled, or into which he was plunged, was an emblem of the purification which he required and received. It did not purify, but it prefigured and betokened purification. As was said afterwards of Christian baptism, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord;” so would the Jewish teacher say, Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thine idolatry:—as the water cleanses the defilement of the body, so let the cor-

⁵ Maimonides. Quoted by Wall.

ruption which has defiled the soul be purged and cleansed.

Still it might be asked, *Why baptizest thou*, when those whom John was baptizing were not heathens, but belonged to the chosen nation, and acknowledged the God of their fathers. He acquaints us, that he *baptized with water* “unto repentance.” “The multitude who came forth to be baptized of him,” confessed that they as much required to be cleansed from the corruption of wilful sin, as the heathens from their ignorant superstitions. Each were to become new creatures, being “purged from their old sins.”⁶

The meaning of the ordinance remained unchanged, when our Lord saw fit to sanction it as the entrance into his religion, the token of his faith: and taught his apostles to “go into all the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The convert to the Hebrew faith washed away his idolatry: the convert to the Christian faith washes away his corrupt nature, in whatever way it may have polluted him: the prayer for him is, that the water with which he is baptized, may be “sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin,” and be attended by “spiritual regeneration.”⁷

It cannot affect the nature of the ordinance, whether it be performed by the *immersion*, or by the *sprinkling* of the body. In whatever way it is performed, it is figurative. The putting away of the defilement of the flesh, is nothing except as it in-

⁶ See 2 Pet. i. 9.

⁷ See Baptismal Service.

dicates the heart renewed, and “believing unto righteousness.” All the waters of Jordan can be no more effectual than the smallest drop, to confer grace which God does not bestow, or wash away sin which God does not forgive. And therefore we bring our children to the font, in humble hope and earnest prayer, that as the body is sprinkled with water, so the heart may be “sprinkled from an evil conscience,” “sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ,”⁸ and renewed by the Spirit unto righteousness and true holiness: and thus the words of the prophet may be accomplished, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.”⁹

In regard to ourselves, we have all been baptized with water unto “repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” We do not rest upon the formal ceremony, though we do not undervalue it, as that which was appointed of our Lord himself, and dignified by his own example. But as the body without the soul is dead, so the form without the spirit is dead also. The outward purification must be answered by inward purity: and baptism must “save us, not” as it is “the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but,” as it is “the answer of a good conscience towards God.”¹

⁸ See Heb x. 22. 1 Pet. i. 2. ⁹ Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

LECTURE X.

JOHN DESCRIBES JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD.

JOHN i. 29—34.

29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

30. *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me : for he was before me.*

31. *And I knew him not : but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

32. *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.*

33. *And I knew him not : but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.*

34. *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Jesus had been living in retirement while the Baptist was fulfilling his public ministry. Therefore John *knew him not* : yet he knew the purpose for which he came. The Spirit had revealed this to him ; and therefore he is able to bear record to him as *the Son of God*, whose ministry was to set aside his own, who was to complete, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, that baptism of repentance which he had himself been hitherto exercising.

He points him out to his disciples in terms which at once explain a whole volume of type and prophecy. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

We had been told before, "The Word was made flesh." The reason, the purpose of this incarnation is now disclosed. It is all contained in the description, *The Lamb of God*. He came to be the propitiation for sin. He came to be that, which He alone could be, an atonement to the holiness of God for the guilt incurred by man.

Adam had transgressed the law which he was bound to obey, and involved the whole race of his posterity in corruption. And how could man be pardoned, and the holiness of God's government be maintained? "As by one's man's disobedience many were made sinners," who could be the one, by whose "obedience many might be made righteous?" None of the sons of men could offer an atonement. They needed atonement; for they were themselves corrupt: they had nothing to pay: "No man can redeem his brother, or make agreement unto God for him." But the Son of God, the eternal, uncreated Word, consented to stand in the stead of that guilty race. "In the volume of the book it is written of him, Lo I come to do thy will, O God."¹ Being "without spot of sin," his innocence might be received as a free offering: and, taking man's nature upon him, he could suffer man's penalty.

This was determined from the beginning. Jesus

¹ Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 4, &c.

is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."² And being so determined, it was foreshown in various ways. From the earliest times, the patriarchs are represented as offering sacrifice to God. As mankind were dispersed, they carried the custom with them, though its purpose was lost and forgotten. But the whole is contained in the law given by Moses to the Israelites. It could not be mistaken, when the priest laid his hands upon the head of the creature intended for an offering, and made confession of sin over the head of the sacrifice;³ thus prefiguring what was afterwards to be more fully explained, how the Lord had laid on one the iniquity of all.⁴

By the ordinances of the law, various animals were used in sacrifice; but none so constantly as the lamb. One was offered up in the temple every morning, and another every evening: and on the sabbath, two.⁵ But it was the rite of the passover which most evidently and remarkably typified that full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of all men, which was consummated upon the cross. The lamb slain as the passover was to be without blemish.⁶ So was Jesus without spot of sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.⁷ The lamb was to be "of the first year;" so Christ was cut off in the prime of his days, and slain by such a death, that, as was ordered in the killing of the passover, "not a bone of him was broken." The lamb was to be slain by the "whole assembly

² Rev. xiii. 8.³ Lev. xvi. 21.⁴ Isa. liii.⁵ Num. xxviii. 3—10.⁶ Exod. xii. 3, &c.⁷ See 1 Pet. i. 19.

of the congregation of Israel." So it was on the principal festival of the year that "counsel was taken against Jesus, to put him to death:" and the whole people made it their own act, by exclaiming, "Crucify him! crucify him!" "His blood be on us and on our children!" The lamb, too, was slain in the evening. And so it was in the evening, "about the ninth hour," when Jesus, "knowing that all things were now accomplished" which he had undertaken for our salvation, declared,—*"It is finished;"*—*"and bowed his head and gave up the ghost."* And as in the manner of the sacrifice all was similar, so was the effect the same. The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts of the houses preserved the people of Israel from the messenger of destruction. And so the blood of Christ, sprinkled, as it were, upon our hearts, is designed to exempt the sinner from the stroke of divine justice, and save him from "the bitter pains of eternal death." Thus was atonement made to the justice of God: who, in mercy to man's ruined and helpless state, has covenanted to receive the blood of one instead of the blood of many, and to be reconciled to the penitent offender for the sake of his dear Son.

Here then is the sense in which we behold Jesus as *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*:—taketh away all that sin which is laid upon him by the faith of the penitent offender. The words of the Baptist show that he possessed the key of that mysterious worship which God had

established, and was empowered to disclose its meaning, hitherto concealed. He points to Jesus, and exclaims, *Behold the Lamb of God*. And behold, in him, the person so long prefigured by the sacrifices of the law. Behold the one righteous, designed in the counsels of God as a substitute for many sinners. Behold the true Paschal Lamb, who is offered for us, to take away the sin of the world: who by his death shall destroy death, and by his rising to life again shall restore to us everlasting life. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

The application of these words of the Baptist is simple and clear. *Behold the Lamb of God*. Let wilful offenders against the divine command behold the testimony which God has borne to the heinousness of sin, in the fact established by the law of Moses, that “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

But let the humble and contrite behold, in *the Lamb of God*, an evident proof of the divine mercy. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”^s “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things”⁹ “pertaining to life and godliness?”

^s Rom. v. 10.

⁹ Rom. viii. 32.

LECTURE XI.

ANDREW, AND SIMON, AND OTHERS, CALLED AS APOSTLES OF JESUS. ESPECIAL MENTION OF NATHANAEL.

JOHN i. 35—51.

35. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples ;*

36. *And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God !*

37. *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

38. *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou ?*

39. *He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day : for it was about the tenth hour.*

Though the call of these disciples was peculiar, the circumstances attending it are full of instruction.

They heard the Baptist point to Jesus as he walked, and say, *Behold the Lamb of God*, “which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold him “of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write ;” him “who should come,” and whom

“ God hath now sent to bless you :” “ a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.”

How many amongst us are constantly hearing Jesus represented as “ the way, the truth, and the life,” yet pass by on the other side ! But these *followed Jesus*. Followed him, but not unknown or unobserved. He sees and encourages the first approach towards him ; the first breathings of their faith. *He turned, and saw them following : and when they inquired, Master, where dwellest thou ? he saith unto them, Come and see.*

This was a further trial of sincerity. Many will appear interested for a while, and then stop short. But *these came, and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day*. And whoever with an honest and good heart will consent to *come and see*, shall not remain unsatisfied. In the abode where Jesus dwells, he will see “ righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” He will see that which can no where else be found.

And then, having learnt the truth, and discovered the greatness of the blessing, he will not keep the secret within his own breast, but will hasten to communicate it to his friends.

40. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*¹

41. *He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah,*² *which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

¹ The other is commonly supposed to have been St. John himself.

² *The Messiah*, signifying in Hebrew the same as *the Christ* in Greek, the anointed.

42. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona : thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.*³

Here Jesus intimates what he afterwards confirmed ; that Simon should be endued with such a firm and consistent temper, as should “ be set like a flint,”⁴ inflexible and unbroken : he should be a corner-stone of the temple which was about to be soon raised to the honour of God and the salvation of man.

All Christians have not the prominent station which Peter held. But he himself speaks of all Christians, as being living stones in that spiritual temple, the church of God.⁵ And none can maintain their integrity, who are not resolute and firm ; as a *stone*, solid and stedfast : a character which they receive, as Simon received his new name, from the Lord who has called them.

43. *The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.*

44. *Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

45. *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

46. *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !*

³ Or rock, on whose preaching the foundation of my church shall be raised. See Matt. xvi. 18.

⁴ Isa. l. 7.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

48. *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.*

The whole of this history is instructive. When Philip first acquainted Nathanael of his own belief, that the Christ was to be found in the person of *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*, Nathanael betrays a lurking prejudice. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Can so obscure a place, so ill reputed of, send forth the Holy One of God, the King of Israel? And do not the prophets speak of Bethlehem as the birth-place of the Messiah?⁶

This prejudice might not have been altogether blamable. He was not to take on trust so great a matter. Let him “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” He did not speak in the spirit of the Pharisees afterwards, when they said in scorn, and without inquiry, “Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.” When Philip invited him to *come and see*, he did not make excuse; he did not plead his family, or his business and worldly cares: he arose and went with Philip. And then we perceive how Philip had been directed by a superior guidance, that he should *find Nathanael*. He was suited to the purpose in which henceforth he was to be employed; for he was “a Jew, not outwardly, but inwardly;” whose “circumcision was of the heart:” *an Israelite*

⁶ See Matt. ii. 4—6.

indeed, in whom is no guile. He was not one of those who “loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men.” He sought the retreat of his garden, and the shade of his fig-tree, and there he poured out his soul before God. This, surely, (though it is only conjecture,) is the allusion of Jesus, who said, *when thou wert under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;” and the prayer which is offered in secret, shall be “rewarded openly.”

Such a proof of divine knowledge was irresistible to the mind of Nathanael.

49. *Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God : thou art the King of Israel.*

50. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.*

51. *And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

There were many seasons, even whilst the Son of man was on earth, when this sight might have been witnessed, and “angels came and ministered unto him.” We cannot tell with certainty whether these are alluded to, or no. Hereafter, doubtless, the whole world shall see it together, when “the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and shall sit on the throne of his glory.”

But another truth is contained here, of great practical importance. Nathanael had not resisted the first call to inquiry, nor the first impulse of conviction. He had yielded his mind to the evidence which was presented to him. “To him that hath shall be given. Jesus says, *Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.* So it is universally. “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”⁴ “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”⁵ He that now “goeth on his way softly,” but sincerely, and opens his heart to the motions of the Holy Spirit, shall be brought to *see greater things*, than, in the beginning of his course and the infancy of his faith, he had ventured to desire.

LECTURE XII.

JOHN ii. 1—11.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IS PERFORMED IN CANA AT A MARRIAGE.

1. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*
2. *And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

⁴ Jerem. xxix. 13.

⁵ Hos. vi. 3.

3. *And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.*

4. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman,¹ what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

5. *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

In this domestic history is represented to us the way in which the Eternal Word, whose majesty has been so fully described, “dwelt amongst us” in form and fashion as a man. The first narrative which we read, relates to his conduct at a common family entertainment, to which, according to custom, all the friends and neighbours of the bridegroom were invited.

It is not clear with what purpose the mother said to Jesus, *They have no wine*. But from his answer it would seem to be said with an expectation that he would exercise his power. And her order to the servants implies the same: *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*.

Those who wait long, and seek the Lord, know not when the hour may come that he shall see fit to hear them, and interpose. But they may be

¹ Though to our ears this appellation sounds harshly, there is no such effect according to the usage of the original language. The word *γυνα* might as properly have been translated, Mother. The whole answer, however, may contribute to show that *the mother of Jesus*, as such, is entitled to none of the veneration which belongs to the Son alone. Whether so intended or not, it leaves them without excuse, who taking the honour from the Son, have exalted Mary as “the queen of heaven,” “the hope,” “the life,” “the health of the world.”

sure that he does not neglect or overlook them, and is only delaying till the proper hour arrives. In the mean while their course is clearly prescribed to them. *Whatsoever he saith unto thee, do it.*

6. *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*²

7. *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

8. *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

9. *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew :) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

10. *And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.*

The intention of the miracles performed by Jesus is shown in these words, *He manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.* The miracles were needful to prove the authority with which he came. The people asked, as they had a right to ask, "What sign showest thou, that thou doest these things?" What sign dost thou give us, that thou hast a claim to our faith and obedience? And the natural answer was that which he himself

² According to their constant habit of washing before meals,

alleged: "If I had not done among them the things which none other man did, they had not had sin;" they would not be condemned for disbelieving me.

It is only by some change in the usual course of nature, either by the communication of superhuman knowledge, or by an interruption of the settled order of the universe, that a revelation can be proved to be of heaven, and not of men. For this purpose alone God has seen fit to interpose, and occasionally to permit a change in that arrangement of things which he established at the creation. He did so in the case of Moses. Moses very naturally expected that neither the Israelites nor the Egyptians would attend to his summons. (Ex. iv. 1.) "He answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." And the Lord promised power, by which his mission might be plainly understood, when he assured him, "Certainly I will be with thee." It was the same with Joshua till the will of God was accomplished by the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan: it was the same with Elijah, when he recalled the people from their idolatry. And now the divinity of Jesus was manifested in the like manner. What we call *the laws of nature*, i. e. the principles on which God framed the world, were suspended at his command: water became wine: the sea was calmed: the provision of bread was augmented: the fig-tree withered away: fever, even death, was arrested in its course.

Thus the Creator did again, what he had before done at the creation. He visibly exercised that power to change the regular system of things, which he is constantly exercising to keep the system regular. It is not more surprising that a certain union of substances should produce wine, than that they should produce water: that the juice by which a tree is nourished should suddenly fail, than that sap should ever flow within its pores. It is not more surprising that the substance of a few loaves and fishes should be enlarged, till many thousands were satisfied with food, than that any substance should ever be produced where none existed before. It is not more surprising that the eye should be enabled to see, or the ear to hear, than that any ear should be formed for hearing, or any eye for seeing. It is not more astonishing that the blood should be restored to its natural circulation, or that the lungs should breathe again, than that blood should be "the life of man" at all, or that "the breath of life" should ever have been imparted.

If, then, it at first seems strange to you, that Jesus should perform these wonders and mighty deeds, look back to the beginning, when God created the heaven and the earth. What could be more strange than that God should say, "Let there be light,—and there was light." "Let us make man in our image.—And man became a living soul." And we were before told, that "nothing was made, that was made, without" him who was now exercising his power: exercis-

ing his power to change or to suspend what he had at first ordained and established. The object was no light one; it was one which could not otherwise be fulfilled: it was to show that he who had now been born into the world was indeed “a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And St. John here, unintentionally as it were, alludes to the effect produced upon his own mind, and the minds of his brethren. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and his disciples believed on him.*

We, who could not witness the miracles, believe on him “through their word.” And if we continue stedfast in the faith, the promise made by Jesus to Nathanael may be again applied. We “shall see greater things than these.” Indeed, greater things are daily seen, when the promise of the Scripture is fulfilled, and a new heart and a right spirit is given to any man. It is much to govern the material elements, and can be done by him alone who moulded them in their original form: but it is more to govern the human will, and give a new direction to the affections; to raise them above things seen, and fix them upon things eternal.

May we be all conscious of this superior power exercised over ourselves!

LECTURE XIII.

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE OF THOSE WHO
PROFANED IT, GIVING AN EXAMPLE OF RELI-
GIOUS ZEAL.

JOHN ii. 12—25.

12. *After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples : and they continued there not many days.*

13. *And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,¹*

14. *And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.*

15. *And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ;*

16. *And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*

17. *And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.²*

¹ The first passover, A. D. 30, the first year of the ministry of Jesus.—*Newcome*.

² Ps. lxi. 9. The whole passage stands thus: "For thy sake I have borne reproach ; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children : for the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up : and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me."

This recollection of St. John is interesting. He seems to allude to some surprise felt at the time by the apostles. And certainly there was much to astonish them. Jesus saw, with great indignation, an evil practice which the proper guardians of the temple had overlooked, or countenanced. When he saw it, the fire kindled within him; he laid aside his usual character, and eagerly engaged himself in dispersing those who profaned his Father's house. This surprised them. But their surprise was checked when they remembered the words of Scripture, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. I am even consumed by my zealous feelings for the honour of thy house.

“It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing:” and the wonder is, that we should be so earnest in trifles, and so lukewarm in what is most important. But the same inward feelings will always lead to similar conduct. They had led David to say, “I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”³ And now a like emotion is hallowed by the Son of God. It is *my Father's house* which is thus desecrated!

Ought we not to feel the same, when we hear the name of God profaned; when we see his commands neglected; when multitudes have no knowledge of him? We too should be zealous for the honour of our heavenly Father. And this zeal

³ Ps. cxxxii. 3—5.

must not evaporate in mere vague or idle lamentation ; but after the example of Jesus, we must endeavour to promote what we desire, and remove the evils over which we mourn.

18. *Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ?*

19. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*

20. *Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, ⁴ and wilt thou rear it up in three days ?*

21. *But he spake of the temple of his body.*

22. *When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them : and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

The temple which they profaned, whilst they professed to hold it in veneration, was the temple of which they thought and spoke. He spoke of a greater temple, *the temple of his body*. And he had reason to term it so. For a temple like that at Jerusalem is raised to the honour of God, a testimony to his name, in the midst of a world which he has made, but which is too often forgetful of its Maker. And such also was the body which had been now prepared for Jesus, when “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.” It was given him that he might glorify God in the bodily form and nature of

⁴ This speaks of the gradual restoration of the second, or Zerubbabel's temple, which Herod had begun to rebuild sixteen years before the birth of Christ. Forty-six years had now elapsed, and the repair was not yet completed.

man, first by living to his service, and then by dying as a sacrifice to his holiness.

We must bear in mind, however, that this term, great and honourable as it is, is not applied to the body of Jesus alone. St. Paul addresses every Christian when he says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”⁵ The temple is dedicated to the service of God. And so are those whom Christ has called to be a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

When the Lord of the temple came, seeking what he had a right to expect there, piety and devotion, he found it made a *house of merchandise*; nay, even “a den of thieves.” Let it not then be so with us, when the Lord shall finally come to examine the spiritual temple, which it is the purpose of his grace to purify; when he takes “account of things “done in the body, whether they be good or bad.” “The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?”⁶ At his second coming, let him not find that unseemly or unworthy things have got possession there, where everything ought to be inscribed with “holiness to the Lord.” “For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” “Therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.”

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 19; iii. 16.

⁶ Mal. iii. 1, 2.

23. *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.*

24. *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,*

25. *And needed not that any should testify of man : for he knew what was in man.*

He knew the weakness, the fickleness of these people, *and did not commit himself unto them. They believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did :* but he perceived in them no stability ; nothing that promised zealous and consistent faith. The soil was so light or so stony, that even if the blade shot up for a while, it would soon wither away and perish, when the first heat of temptation came.

Jesus still *knows what is in man.* This should be an awful thought to the hollow and insincere professor. It is the greatest comfort of the humble and earnest Christian, who is struggling against his infirmities, and lamenting his unworthiness ; but on whose heart is written, as it was on that of Paul, “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”⁷

⁷ Gal. vi. 14.

LECTURE XIV.

JOHN iii. 1—5.

NICODEMUS IS ASSURED OF THE NECESSITY OF
REGENERATION.

1. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews :*

2. *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

We may feel assured that these words, though they convey a general truth applicable to all mankind, were especially suited to the frame of mind in which Nicodemus came to Jesus. As we were lately told, “He needed not that any should testify of man ; for he knew what was in man :” and therefore he addressed his language to the case of the individual inquirer. What then may we suppose to have been the character of Nicodemus ? He was *a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews* : accustomed, therefore, to think highly of himself in comparison of others ; accustomed to believe himself safe in God’s favour ; confident, perhaps, that he was, “according to the

righteousness which is of the law, blameless.” And how surprised would a person of such disposition be, when he heard from the lips of one whom he knew to be *a teacher sent from God, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* A change must take place in him, which can only be compared to his being born anew, before he can be a member of that kingdom of God which is now come nigh unto you.

We may suppose, perhaps, that there was some idiom in language, some customary form of speech, which made this sentence appear less strong and forcible to Nicodemus, than it appears to us now. Men are apt to explain away in this manner that which they do not like to understand. It was not so, however. We perceive by what follows, that he took it in its broadest and most literal meaning.

4. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Here then is the explanation: Jesus had said, *Ye must be born again.* He repeats it, and declares that *a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of water and of the Spirit*: except he be renewed by the Spirit cleansing and purifying him; unless an effect is produced upon the heart like that which water produces upon the body, and it is cleansed from its natural pollution.

They are remarkable expressions:—to be *born again, born of water and of the Spirit*:—but they

exactly describe the thing intended. A man is first born “of blood, of the will of the flesh, of the will of man.” But he is born corrupt; the offspring of a corrupt parent. As we are told presently, “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” He must be *born again of water and of the Spirit*:—of water, inasmuch as he was born impure, and must now be cleansed:—of the Spirit, inasmuch as he must be “renewed in the spirit of his mind.” The water cleanses, “the Spirit giveth life.” The water represents that purification which he needs, and which is bestowed through the blood of Christ. The Spirit enables him to walk as one who is “purged from his old sins,” his corrupt nature, and is mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and living not to this world, but unto God.

For this reason, our Lord appointed as the entrance into his religion, a rite which should be an emblem of this change. He sent his disciples into all the world, BAPTIZING.

Baptism was no new ordinance, otherwise we should have more account of its introduction. It was explained in a former lecture, that baptism had been practised among the Jews, when one who had lived a heathen came to acknowledge the living and true God, and gave up the idols which he had been used to serve. Before he was admitted to their religion, he was baptized with water. He had been polluted by idolatry, and all its attendant wickedness; from this he must be purified. And his baptism with water was an emblem of the purification which he required and received. It did not purify—but it prefigured and

betokened purification. It was an emblematical action, signifying, that as the water cleanses the defilement of the body, so must the corruption which has defiled the soul be purged and cleansed. And such is the declaration to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born again, born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Except a man be so truly renewed, that you may term him a new creature: except he be as thoroughly purified by the effusion of the Spirit on his soul, as his body would be purified by pouring on it a stream of water; he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, that kingdom which Nicodemus was inquiring of. He may esteem himself—perhaps Nicodemus did—clean in the sight of God; but he needs a cleansing which he can only receive from the Spirit, through faith in the Son of God, before he can belong to God's heavenly kingdom.

This may be best illustrated, by considering the case of some who were thus *born again*.

The Jewish assembly, addressed by St. Peter (Acts ii. 14, &c.) became convinced of the wickedness in which they had been led to concur; and “being pricked in their hearts, said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

The idea of *baptism* was not strange or new to this assembly. They had known that proselytes from the heathen were baptized, when they turned

from idols, and entered into the service of the living and true God, revealed to the Jewish nation. The heathen washed away the corruption of their idolatrous traditions. And these must wash away the corruption of prejudice and unbelief and hardness of heart, which had led them to “crucify the Prince of life.” They must make this acknowledgment, that they required to be cleansed by the water of regeneration; and were to rise out of it as “new creatures,” from whom “old things had passed away.”

“Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized.” Was it too much to say, they were *born again*? They had crucified Jesus: now they worshipped him. They had prided themselves in God’s favour: now they humbled themselves, and entreated remission of their sins. They were enabled, for the sake of that future life now set before them, to fix their affections, not on the things that are seen, but on the inheritance which is above. They were indeed new creatures: before they had lived for earth, now for heaven. “All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

Another example occurs in the case of the Ethiopian who was returning from his worship at Jerusalem. (Acts viii.) He had learnt through the Jewish Scriptures to serve God. But as yet he knew nothing of the Redeemer. A particular commission was given to Philip, as a Christian teacher, to explain to him the doctrine of the

Gospel. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Why may I not receive the benefit which Jesus, whom thou preachest unto me, came to bestow? Why may I not *enter into the kingdom of God, being born again of water and of the Spirit*; “putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?”¹ Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” “And he went on his way rejoicing.” Having thus given an evidence of his faith, having been admitted into the covenant of grace, having received the pledge of the Holy Spirit, he went on his way rejoicing.

These are practical illustrations of our Lord’s meaning; *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* The kingdom of God is a kingdom of holiness: and man is not holy but corrupt. The Saviour of the world has provided a way for his purification. Therefore the entrance into his religion is by an emblematical action, which indicates that man both needs to be renewed and purified, and desires to be renewed and purified; desires that as water removes the defilement of the flesh, so the Spirit

¹ See Eph. iv. 22—24.

of God may remove the corruption of the heart.² If a man comes, like the Ethiopian, or like the Jews, of his own accord, and from personal conviction, and says, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" he makes this acknowledgment for himself. If an infant is brought to baptism, the same acknowledgment is made by those who bring him. The parents, or whoever take the parents' place, come with this avowal. Their child is of a corrupt stock, sinful; but they desire that he may be born again, washed in the fountain "opened for sin and for all uncleanness;"—and that a new heart may be put within him, "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." And thus they enrol him as a member of God's kingdom.

It were well if every child, which is presented in the temple for the outward ceremony of baptism, were brought with this intelligent conviction: with a sense of the necessity of this spiritual regeneration, and an earnest desire and prayer that it might be obtained! The Lord approved of the zeal of those parents who "brought their young children to him, that he might touch them." It was done in faith, that he was a prophet; it was done in hope, that a prophet's blessing might avail. It was done in earnestness and with full purpose of heart; for when his disciples rebuked those that brought

² Hence the ancient custom of putting white robes upon baptized persons, as signifying the purification of the soul expected by virtue of their baptism: and expressed in a poem found among the works of Lactantius, *Fulgentes animas vestis quoque candida signat.*

them, they still persevered, till Jesus “laid his hands upon them and blessed them.” And so there is reason to believe that he will hear and favour the prayers of all parents who come in like simplicity of heart and faith: who feel that they have bestowed upon their offspring an earthly, corrupt nature, which would lead, not to life, but to death:—“for that which is born of the flesh, is flesh:”—and who therefore present their children to him who can change and renew that nature, and make it like unto his own. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Would God, my brethren, that this truth were better understood, and this reasonable, this primitive, this scriptural baptism more generally practised! Then we should not find so many who, though born of water, as far as concerns the baptismal rite, are evidently not made new creatures by the Spirit, who renews and sanctifies the soul.

And let all examine, how it is with themselves. Can it be said of them, that they have been *born again*? It *must* be true of them, if they belong to the kingdom of God. For “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”³ He is entirely different from what he would be, if he were not in Christ Jesus. His trust is different: his views are different: his life is different. For he lives and thinks as one who knows, “that as many as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized into his death.” And “therefore they are buried with

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so they also should walk in newness of life.”⁴

LECTURE XV.

THE NECESSITY AND MEANS OF REGENERATION DECLARED.

JOHN iii. 6—8.

6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

This sentence explains that which was last considered. Jesus had assured Nicodemus, that “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And now he proceeds to declare, why this is needed. He tells it in short but important words: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*

The flesh is a phrase used in Scripture to signify man’s nature. And that nature, as derived from Adam, is a corrupt and evil nature. Adam did not receive it so, for he was created pure and innocent: but he made it so when he transgressed the commands of God, and lost the innocence which he

⁴ See Rom. vi. 3, 4.

possessed, and the grace with which he had been endowed. And men since born his children are born in his likeness; inherit the nature of their sinful parents: are “very far gone from original righteousness,” and from their earliest years are “inclined to evil” continually.

This is what our Lord declares: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*: that which man brings with him into the world is tainted with the sinfulness which has adhered to the human heart ever since the transgression of Adam.

But this sinfulness, however it may prevail on earth, can have no place in heaven. “Corruption cannot inherit incorruption.” Unholy man cannot be admitted into the presence of a holy God. Therefore this corrupt nature must be cleansed and renewed. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And for this regeneration and renewal, provision is made in the Gospel of Christ Jesus. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*. The Spirit fulfils the well-known prophecy, “A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you.” The Spirit purifies the sinful principle, and enables the man to renounce evil, and to cleave to that which is good: to subdue wicked propensities, and to follow love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Thus *the flesh*, the corrupt nature which is contrary to God, shall be subdued, and another nature introduced which shall be not earthly, but heavenly; not carnal, but spiritual; not contrary to God, averse from

his will, and strange to the holiness which belongs to him, but delighting in the will of God, aspiring after holiness, and setting the affections on things above. So that it might be truly affirmed, "If a man be in Christ Jesus, he is born again: is a new creature."

Jesus is well aware that this would seem to Nicodemus "a hard saying," a mysterious doctrine. But he bids him look, not to the difficulty or strangeness of the work, but to the power by which it is to be performed.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

This is a singular and instructive comparison. The Spirit is compared to the wind, because both the Spirit and the wind are manifest from what they do, but are not seen in themselves, nor under man's control. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.* There is hardly anything in nature, over which man has so little power. God holds the winds, as he "holds the waters, in the hollow of his hand."¹ The wind and storm fulfil his word. But man can do nothing to direct, or regulate, or restrain it. *The wind bloweth where it listeth.*

And such, says our Lord, is the case with the

¹ Job ix.

Spirit. It is beyond our power, or reach, or control. Those who are born of the Spirit, are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We cannot command the Spirit, and say, Come, and he cometh. The parent cannot secure the Spirit for his child, nor the child for his parent. The minister cannot engage that the Spirit shall influence the hearts of his people. Neither can the people secure that the Spirit may rest upon their minister, that he may “open his mouth boldly,” or “rightly divide the word of truth.” They can pray with hope, nay with confidence: but still there may be some reason, some hindrance known to God, and sufficient in his sight, why the gift should be withheld. They are constantly reminded, that the Spirit is not theirs to give.

At the same time we must be far from supposing, because the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, that there are not sure and regular causes for its breathing on one and not on another. Though we cannot determine or divert the course of the wind, nothing in nature is under more regular command. The stars are not more exactly governed, though the stars rise at a known and certain time, and the changes of the wind are to us uncertain. There is as much reason why the wind blows from a particular quarter, and why it blows sometimes gently and sometimes forcibly, as there is reason why a stone falls to the ground, or a feather floats in the air. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* The Spirit’s influence is settled and directed by divine

wisdom, though that wisdom is often to us unsearchable, and “its ways past finding out.”

But though we cannot control the operation of the wind or of the Spirit, we can see the effects of both, and we know the presence of both by those effects. Of the wind it is said here, *Thou hearest the sound thereof*. It breathes in the gentle gales of spring, and all nature is refreshed and rejoiced; it roars in the boisterous storm, and the forest shakes, and the vast sea heaves under its force. So likewise is the effect of the Spirit on the heart. The effect is manifest, though the agent is not visible. It is seen in that “righteousness, and peace, and joy,” which are among its most precious results. Or it is seen in that boldness, and zeal, and energy, which rises against opposition; which takes the kingdom of heaven by violence; which rebukes the tyrant on his throne, and defies even the “king of terrors.”

These are proofs of the Spirit which will be differently manifested in different characters, according to their respective circumstances. But there is one proof which must be evident in every man who has a christian hope in him: namely, that the flesh is subdued to the spirit. St. Paul has shown us, (Rom. viii. 1—14,) that it is the great business of the christian life to “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts:” as it is the sure mark of a Christian that “he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*; and “they that are after the flesh cannot please God; because the carnal mind is enmity

against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”²

LECTURE XVI.

DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS CONTINUED. THE TYPE OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN iii. 9—15.

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

10. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*

12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.*

² Rom. viii. 10—14.

Nicodemus ought to have understood the necessity of that regeneration of which he was so hard to be convinced. For it was nothing new, to a *master of Israel*, to one instructed out of the law and the prophets. David had prayed, that God would “create a new heart, and a right spirit within him.¹” And God had promised the same, by the mouth of his prophets: saying in many places, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”²

But even if it had not been so, and these things had been more novel and more mysterious than they were, Jesus was to be believed. He had given proofs that he ought to be believed: and Nicodemus had come, acknowledging this: acknowledging that he had shown himself to be a teacher sent from God. Yet he disputes his teaching, and says, *How can these things be?*

This is very common. We avow our belief, and we do believe, that Jesus is the Son of God; and yet we *receive not his witness*: and live and act as if those things could not be, or would not be, of which he has declared, *We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.*

And yet if we refuse this testimony, to whom shall we go? *No man hath ascended up to heaven*: no man can tell us of heavenly things, *but he that came down from heaven* for that express purpose, *even the Son of man which is in heaven*: whose abode

¹ Ps. li. 10.

² Ez. xxxvi. 25.

is heaven, whose dwelling is with God from the beginning.

Let not such a witness have cause to say of any of us, Ye receive not my testimony. The words which immediately follow show, that to refuse it is death, to receive it everlasting life.

14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up :

15. That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.

Here another truth is set before Nicodemus, which might more justly appear new and strange to him.

We read in Numbers xxi. (6—9,) that the people, weary of their detention in the wilderness, murmured against God and his servant Moses. “And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people ; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee : pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole ; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole ; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.”

This transaction, we now learn, had a meaning

which could not be then foreseen ; a reference beyond itself. As *Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.* As the serpent was raised on high, in the midst of the camp, that it might be beheld by all the people : even so must the Son of man be raised upon the cross, that all might behold the Lamb of God, the sacrifice offered for the sin of the world.

And for a like cause. The cause why Moses lifted up the serpent, was the hopeless state to which their sins had reduced the Israelites. "The people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee : pray unto the Lord, that he may take away the serpents from us." And the cause why Jesus was lifted up, was the sin of mankind. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all had sinned."³ And then it was, by reason of this sad and hopeless condition, that the compassion of God was moved, and he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." This is the first resemblance. But a further resemblance is found in the nature of the remedy. Of the Israelites, as many as looked up towards the serpent of brass, were healed of their wounds. Of sinners, it is promised that whosoever look up to the Son of man, shall find the remedy of their sins. Their wound is healed, and is not a wound unto death. They are assured that "the"

³ Rom. v. 12.

blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." They are assured, that "sin shall not have dominion over them." "They are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Thus is the consequence of sin removed, and it has no more power to destroy.

The difficulty is to feel that sense of danger which shall rouse us to seek deliverance. This must be done by ourselves. As there has been *a lifting up* on God's part, there must be *a looking up* on ours. And here it is not with us as with the Israelites. The Israelites could not but perceive the malignancy of their bodily malady. The disease of the soul is hidden and concealed from our notice. But if anything can convince us of its fatal consequences, it must be the remedy which God has mercifully provided. *The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish.* Unless then the Son of man be lifted up, there is no more help nor hope, than there was help or hope to the Israelites, till Moses lifted up the serpent of brass, that they who had been bitten might look upon it and live.

This brings the subject closely home. Have you felt the wound which sin has inflicted upon the soul, and felt it deeply enough to seek its remedy? Have you found that remedy in the sacrifice of Christ, now offered as a full and perfect satisfaction? Then is the Son of man to you, what the brazen serpent was to the Israelites. God has said to us, as to them, "Look unto him and be saved, all ye ends

of the earth.” And he has also said, “There is no other name under heaven given among men,” whereby ye may obtain health and salvation.⁴

LECTURE XVII.

DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS CONTINUED.

JOHN iii. 16—21.

16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

17. *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Our Lord had been uttering to Nicodemus things which probably surprised and perplexed him. But he does not leave him without an assurance full of comfort.

He had sought Jesus, under an acknowledgment

⁴ See Acts iv. 12.

that he was “a teacher sent from God.” he is now acquainted that God had indeed sent him as a pledge of his love, as the author of peace and bearer of mercy. He had come to an idolatrous world—a world which had become idolatrous, because men had not “liked to retain God in their knowledge.” He came to a nation which had misused the privileges it enjoyed, had rejected the counsels of God, and despised his reproofs: and yet he came *not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.* He brought an offer of reconciliation; and his first message was, Peace to this rebellious people:—“to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” “Herein was love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

If subjects are in a state of rebellion against their sovereign, and he sends an embassy, offering to receive them again to favour on their laying down their arms: those who refuse his offer, and reject his messenger, are *condemned already.* They are condemned by their act of rebellion; and “his wrath abides upon them;” their state of condemnation continues, because they have not accepted the terms of reconciliation. Such is the case of those, who, like the Jews, reject the counsel of God against themselves.

And what are the grounds of their refusal? Do

they say, We do not know him that is come to be the messenger of the Sovereign: we do not see his credentials? This answer will not avail them, either in law or conscience, if they have refused to examine those credentials, if they have rejected him unheard: still less, if he bore the signs of dignity so manifestly upon him, that all who had eyes to see, might recognise the proofs of his commission.

But what, it might be asked, could induce them to refuse? Could they have any culpable motive, any reason worse than ignorance? Too surely might they have been kept back by pride and hardness of heart: submission requires humility. Too surely they might have been actuated by a rebellious unrestrained spirit: disinclined to the rules imposed upon the subjects of the sovereign. And this, we are here told, was the condemnation of the Jews: that when light was come into the world, *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. Their deeds were evil, their heart was evil; and they would brook no control, submit to no change of life. On several occasions they display this temper. They contended against Jesus, on this sole ground, that he convicted them of sinfulness. "Master, saying this, thou condemnest us also." "Are we blind also?"

Here was a proud, unhumiliated heart, which would not listen to a message of reconciliation. Reconciliation implied enmity. Mercy implied desert of punishment. Peace required submission.

“Take heed,” as St. Paul says, “lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief,” arising from a like cause. Evil habits present a strong obstacle against reason and conviction. “If I believe in the name of Jesus Christ, (so a man may argue with himself,) I must acknowledge his precepts as my rule of life. I must be poor in spirit I must be pure in heart. I must be meek and forgiving, I must be temperate and self-denying. A different society must be lived in: new habits formed: old habits abandoned.” Thus a barrier is raised between a man and serious reflection, when conscience whispers that the result of reflection may make reformation indispensable.

So He has said, who knew the heart of man.

20. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

21. *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Sincerity and insincerity are here exactly described. Insincerity *hateth the light*: sincerity *cometh to the light*: cometh in a spirit like that of the Psalmist, “Teach me, O God, the way of thy statutes!” Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law!” “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me!”

We may illustrate this by the different conduct of two kings of Judah. In the time of Josiah, “the book of the law,” which had been lost sight of

during the ungodliness of some former reigns, was brought unexpectedly to light. (2 Kings xxii. 11 ; xxiii. 2). “And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him ; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.”

Thus it is, that *he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.*

A few years afterwards, God sent a message to the son of this Josiah, Jehoiakim by name. (Jerem. xxxvi. 21.) It was written on a roll of parchment, and “Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month : and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed.” He has left us this awful example, how *every one that doeth evil hateth the*

light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Thus is shown the disposition of the heart, and its spirit proved. And therefore the Almighty hath declared, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”³

LECTURE XVIII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS AS THE CHRIST, AND THE AUTHOR OF LIFE ETERNAL.

JOHN iii. 22—36.

22. *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa : and there he tarried with them, and baptised.*

23. *And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, there was much water there : and they came, and were bap-
tised.*

24. *For John was not yet cast into prison.*

25. *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

26. *And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

³ Is. lxvi. 2.

27. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*

28. *Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.*

29. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

If the spirit of John the Baptist had been “of the world, worldly,” he would have been distressed and grieved at the intelligence which his disciples brought him. *He to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* He would have partaken of the feeling which in them was natural and pardonable, when they were jealous that his honour should be diminished: unwilling that his star should fade before the light of “the Sun of Righteousness.”

But he has the satisfaction of reminding them, that instead of claiming honour, he had uniformly declined it. *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.* And to this he now adds the beautiful remark, *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.* What a multitude of heart-burnings, and envyings, and jealousies are removed when that sentence has possession of the heart! “For what hast thou, which thou hast not received?” Hast thou talents? “Every good and perfect gift cometh from above.” Hast thou station or fortune? “God setteth up one, and

putteth down another.” Hast thou success in thy just and righteous designs? One plants, and another waters; it is “God who giveth the increase.” And if it is God who elevates, who bestows: so it is God also who withholds, who depresses, who denies. “Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” Could we keep this in view, it would banish discontent: for discontent is a want of dependence upon God: a forgetfulness, that as a man can receive nothing, so neither can he be deprived of any thing, but *from heaven*.

John proceeds to bear record to him whose messenger he was, and whose voice he now rejoiced to hear.

31. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John speaks here, as inspired with an ample knowledge of the blessings conveyed by “the covenant

of promise." *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* Who can sufficiently comprehend what is intended in that phrase? The presence of God: and in his "presence is fulness of joy:" the possession of a nature without sin and without sorrow: the deliverance from fear or danger: the exemption from all decay or change for ever.

This is the consummation. But the sentence both here and elsewhere speaks of something in possession. He that believeth *hath* everlasting life. He has now the beginning, the earnest of it. He has it, in reconciliation, acceptance, adoption with God. He has it, in union with Christ. He has it, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has it, in a heart raised beyond this present world, and fixed on things above. He has it, in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." All these blessings are immediate; a new life given now, connected with life everlasting: a life unknown to those who do not belong to the same covenant: a secret hidden life which is animating the man within, whilst outwardly he is partaking of the cares and duties of the world below.

Is this indeed a "treasure," a pearl of great price?" John here tells us to whom it belongs, and by what means it is obtained. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. For the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.* They, then, enjoy the blessing, who believe that God hath sent his Son, that he may give eternal

life to as many as receive him : to all who receive the offer which is made in plain and simple terms, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die : but I will raise him up at the last day." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

They who hear this offer with a hearing ear, reflect within themselves how far it may suit their case, how far it may supply their need. They perceive its fitness. For they are conscious of the distance which separates them from God : that though they live, and move, and have their being in him, their hearts are naturally strangers to the holiness which he requires. They gladly accept the offer, and take the promise home, as simply as it is made. It is offered to the believers, and they believe. It is held out to as many as receive Christ Jesus, and they receive him. They become one with him, and he with them : they dwell in him, and he in them. In all their spiritual growth, he strengthens and cherishes them, as the tree its branches. In their fears and dangers, he is their refuge, as the ark was a refuge to Noah. In their difficulties and labours he directs them, as the head directs the members of the body. And though their life is sometimes feeble and ready to fail, and they are subject to many alternations of health and weakness ; still it survives ; they have life, they have everlasting life, as long as their faith keeps them united to the Saviour *whom God hath sent, who speaketh the words of God. They have received his testimony*, though multitudes re-

fuse it : they have *set to their seal that God is true, and that "faithful is he who hath promised."*

It is not so with those who despise the gift of God, and set at nought his offers. Their state is described here in words few and brief, but amply comprehensive. *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life : but the wrath of God abideth on him.* The ark has floated near them, but they have refused to enter it for safety ; therefore the flood must come, and sweep them all away. They have been nigh to the "city of refuge," and have refused to take shelter within its gates ; therefore *the wrath of God abideth on them.*

LECTURE XIX.

JOHN iv. 1—14.

JESUS DISCOURSES WITH A WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

1. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,*

2. *(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)*

3. *He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.*¹

¹ See Matt. iv. 12 ; Mark i. 14 ; Luke iv. 14.

4. *And he must needs go through Samaria.*

5. *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.²*

6. *Now Jacob's well³ was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

7. *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

8. *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

9. *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

It was indeed an extraordinary providence, a signal *gift of God*, that what many prophets and righteous men had desired to see and had not seen, should now be unexpectedly granted to this Samaritan woman. The restorer of a lost world was before her. The author of eternal life was conversing with her. Without seeking it, without knowing it, she had met with that "hidden treasure," that "pearl of great price," which "when a man has found, he sells all he has" to obtain.

² As related Gen. xlviii. 22, in the account of Jacob's death. "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

³ A well which bore the name of Jacob.

We too must remember *the gift of God*, in making us to differ from that vast multitude who are yet strangers to the blessings of redemption. And the Lord here shows how those will act, who are happy in knowing these things. *Thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water.* In a future discourse it is explained what that *living water* is. “This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe in him shall receive.” The Spirit, which renews, and cleanses, and sanctifies the soul; which comforts and instructs it, and guides it into all truth; which enables it to discern heavenly things, and to live the life of faith in the Son of God; this is the blessing intended here; the blessing which Christ alone can give; the blessing which they who *know the gift of God*, will ask of him; and which all who do ask of him shall receive.

This was as yet an unknown language to the Samaritan.

11. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?*

12. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*

13. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:*

14. *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

See here described, in vivid terms, the effect of that Spirit which Jesus sheds abroad upon the heart. First by comparison of what it is not, and does not resemble. *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.* How truly does this characterise the things which are most valued in this world! *Whosoever drinketh, shall thirst again.* The pleasures of the world, whenever they are made the chief object, how truly unsatisfying are they, wearying when present, yet leaving the mind restless till it returns to them, and is again wearied. Riches, honours! these too, they who have tasted, *thirst again*: something is still wanting, and yet remains to be acquired, often even on the brink of the grave.

It is not thus with the living water, drawn from the well of salvation.

1. It never fails. It is a living spring, perpetually flowing; not a "broken cistern," which may be soon exhausted. The more grace is sought, the more is grace bestowed. If all the world would ask—for all have need to ask, and all must seek at the right source—but if all would ask and seek, not one should be refused. The invitation has no limits. It is wide as the prophet's words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

2. Next, it always satisfies. *Whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him, shall never thirst.* No craving void ensues, no restless desire is left to harass and disturb. It brings with it, and sheds over the soul, a calm, a satisfying comfort which

nothing else can give, and which only those who have enjoyed it can understand.

3. And, thirdly, it has an object and an end to which nothing earthly can be compared. *It springeth up into everlasting life.* It proceeds in a course which is to lead to that inestimable and inconceivable blessing.

And in this view, how justly may the Spirit which Jesus communicates be described as a spring of *living water*. Consider such a spring. It has its source in the rain and dews which God has provided to water the earth and make it fruitful. And the living water which Christ affords, proceeds from God. He so loved the world, that he sent his only Son to be the way of salvation.

The spring, small commonly at its source, gains strength as it flows along. So the Spirit in the heart may at first be as a drop, to which other and fresh drops are continually added, till it becomes a clear and sparkling stream.

The spring, too, proceeding from its perennial source, and flowing onward, purifies its channel as it runs. It carries down before it that which is impure and muddy and would impede its current, and what remains is clear and beautiful. Such likewise is the effect of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul. It meets at first with much that is of an uncongenial nature, much that would sully and corrupt it. But this it gradually clears away. The “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and whatsoever is not of the Father but of the world”—these it carries off, and suffers

not to rest, and choke the stream. Nothing remains but the purer properties of the renewed heart, temperance, and patience, and godliness, and meekness, and charity. These are seen to shine beneath the flowing water, and reflect that "Sun of righteousness," from which their beauty is derived.

As a last point of resemblance, I observe that the stream still runs. It does not stagnate. It seems to have an object, from which it will not be long diverted; it cannot be stopped or restrained. It seeks the wide river or the still wider ocean, in which it is to be received at last. Such too is the living water of the Spirit. It is *in the heart a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. For this it was given; and for this it flows, and will flow on until the end come. When it first began, this was the object at which it aimed; and this it keeps constantly in view till that object is reached. It turns aside whatever would impede its course; and it gathers strength as it continues to flow. Christ, its author, gives fresh supplies from his fullness; gives "grace for grace;" till at last he receives the soul, renewed and purified, into a sea which knows no storms. There it shall glide on through all eternity, in undisturbed peace and in unsullied purity.

Just cause were there to say, *If thou knewest the gift of God—thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

WE all know the gift of God. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." This gra-

cious promise is implied in what is said to the woman: *Thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee.* It is clearly implied, that “who-soever is athirst, may come, and take of the water of life freely.”

LECTURE XX.

DISCOURSE WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA CONTINUED. JESUS DISCLOSES HIMSELF TO HER AS THE CHRIST.

JOHN iv. 15—26.

The woman at the well of Sychar, who gave occasion to the preceding lecture, still continues to understand in its literal sense, and in no other, the allusion of Jesus to *living water*. Upon which he leaves the subject, and proceeds to announce himself to her, and through her to the inhabitants of Samaria, as the Messiah whom they were expecting.

15. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

16. *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*

17. *The woman answered and said, I have no husband.*

Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18. *For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.*

19. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;¹ and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

21. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

22. *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*

The worship of the Samaritans had been corrupted, from the time when they became intermixed with the people of various countries, who had been sent to settle in Samaria, after its conquest by the king of Assyria. The true God had been recognised, and the early Scriptures preserved among them. But the idolatry and superstitions introduced by foreign settlers had been so intermixed with the truth, that they could only be described as *worshipping they knew not what*. The Jews, with all their formality and hypocrisy, still *knew what they worshipped*. They knew Him who had established them “to be a people unto himself.” They had kept the revelation of his will, “the law and the prophets,” pure and entire.

¹ Mount Gerizim. The blessings were promised there. (Deut. xxvii. 12, &c.) Hence the Samaritans inferred that *there* ought to be the temple.

This woman showed by her language that she had little understanding of the real nature of divine worship. Her mind turned to the place, not to the manner of worshipping: whether *this mountain* of Samaria, mount Gerizim, or mount Sion, was the acceptable dwelling-place of the Most High. Jesus foretels, in the first place, the destruction in which both the Jews and the Samaritans were soon about to be involved, which should spare neither the temple at Gerizim, nor even the more costly buildings of Jerusalem. And then he intimates the establishment of a purer faith, which should lead to a spirit of devotion agreeable to the nature of God.

23. *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

24. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

25. *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*

26. *Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

What Jesus declares concerning the worship of God, is the thing to be first attended to here.

He teaches us—by implication—what the worship of God should not be. It should not be a mere form or ceremony. This our nature inclines to make it. This woman's error, is the error of all human nature: treating the worship of God as if it consisted in circumstantialia, and not in realities. People who are very far from a real

knowledge or abiding fear of God, are comparatively ready to comply with religious forms. These satisfy that inward sense, that conviction of reason which prevails, that God must not be altogether neglected.

The Jews, for example, with no love to God in their hearts, were not deficient in their sacrifices and offerings: but are constantly reminded by the prophets, that this was not the chief service which God demanded. Samuel reproves Saul, (1 Sam. xv. 22). “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.”

The Psalmist is made to ask, (l. 13,) “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble.”

So the prophets: (Hos. vi. 6 :) “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.” (Mic. vi. 7.) “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?”

From all these passages it appears that the Jews were not backward to offer outward worship, how-

ever burthensome : and that the reproof of God was, that when they offered sacrifice, they did not feel as penitents ; when they worshipped before him, they were actuated by no sentiments of pious and grateful love.

A kindred error prevails at all times : for as I before hinted, it is not in Jewish nature, nor in Samaritan nature, but in the universal nature of the human heart. How hardly are men persuaded that the services of the church are not in themselves religion, but the signs and means of religion ! How slow are they to understand, that prayer is not merely the performance of a duty, but the expression of the heart ! that the partaking of the Lord's Supper is not faith, but an ordinance for the faithful to observe ! That the consecrated place, the posture, the ceremonial, the rite, are only valuable, as far as they assist the dull and wayward heart to offer what God does value !

For he does value, that is, he graciously condescends to receive, sincere and spiritual worship. That worship which the heart spontaneously offers, when filled with a sense of his holiness, greatness, goodness : when it looks up to him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him, the Father of those whom " he is not ashamed to call his brethren : " when it feels at once levelled to the dust by conscious unworthiness, and yet raised above the world by the covenant of grace. This is the worship which proceeds from the heart, when brought by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of God. Low and feeble as it is, compared

with the majesty of him whom it addresses, still it is not contrary to his nature ; and therefore it is the worship of *truth*. And not being dependent upon mere outward ceremony, though perhaps assisted by it—it is the worship of the *spirit*. And such is the worship, we are assured, which *the Father seeks*. Such is the worship, which being begun here in the frailty and imperfection of our fallen nature, may be perfected hereafter, when that which is sinful is done away, when corruption is changed for incorruption, faith for sight, humiliation for glory. For they that have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”

LECTURE XXI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE DISCIPLES AT THE WELL IN SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 27—38.

27. *And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman :¹ yet no man said, What seekest thou ? or Why talkest thou with her ?*

¹ Explained in v. 9. “For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

28. *The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,*

29. *Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

30. *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.*

31. *In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.*

32. *But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

33. *Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?*

34. *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

The state of mind which is implied in these gracious words, is full of comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

It is when the heart is filled with deep anxiety that there is no desire of food. When the eldest servant of Abraham's house was sent to the city of Nahor to seek a wife for Isaac among his father's kindred, he was taken into the house where Rebekah dwelt with her friends. (Gen. xxiv. 33.) "And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat until I have told my errand." So Samuel, when sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the future king of Israel, when he missed David, the youngest, from the company, said to Jesse, (1 Sam. xvi. 11,) "Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he be come hither." It was the same in the present case. Jesus being wearied with his journey—(for he was bearing our weaknesses, and was subject to our infirmities,)—sat resting on the well. His disciples

went for food ; and on their return, aware of his necessity, pressed him to eat. He, the mean while, had forgotten the exhaustion of nature, and had fed upon the divine work in which he was engaged. *My meat and drink is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

But there is another encouragement arising out of this answer. The earnestness of the messenger depends, in part, on the earnestness of him whose message he conveys. The servant of Abraham was urgent, because Abraham was urgent. Samuel refused to be delayed, because God had sent him with a commission which required to be promptly executed. And so the eager anxiety of Jesus here, was to do the will and finish the work of his heavenly Father. What then was that will ? The salvation of souls. And what that work ? The making himself known as a Redeemer, the author of man's salvation. It is therefore the will of God, that no opportunity be lost of forwarding this work : it is his will that "all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth." Can there be a stronger inducement, either to receive the word of God ourselves, or to communicate it to others ? To communicate it, is to do the work which God would have done : to receive it, is to conform to his will. He desires that man shall be happy in the knowledge of himself, and in the participation of his nature. And the Son of God rejoices in the prospect of imparting this happiness. He goes on to say,

35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest ? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes,

and look on the fields ; for they are white already to harvest.

36. *And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.*

37. *And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth.*

38. *I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour ; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

The husbandman rejoices in his mind, and feels his labour recompensed, when, on looking towards the fields which he has tilled, he sees a just hope of future harvest. And so Jesus bids his disciples look towards the fields of Samaritan ignorance and superstition, and already perceive a promise, even before the expected time. The regular season was not yet ; he had not yet been “ lifted up ” upon the cross, that he might “ draw all men after him.” And yet the fields were white already : for the Samaritans had listened to the summons of the woman to whom he had revealed himself, and were now hastening to see him, who, as she affirmed, had *told her all things that ever she did : is not this the Christ ?*

And this was an earnest of that harvest which the apostles should reap, and which should be to them “ a crown of rejoicing ” in the end. *He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal. He receiveth wages :* for the master whom he serves, “ is not ” unrighteous to forget his work and labour of love : and he *gathereth fruit unto life*

eternal : he shall both “save himself and those that hear him.” “If the faithful reform his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account ; it is *fruit gathered to life eternal*. And if, beyond this, he is instrumental in saving the souls of others too, there is more *fruit gathered* : souls gathered to Christ are fruit, good fruit, the fruit which Christ seeks and desires ; it is gathered for him, and it is gathered to life eternal.”

In the part assigned them in this work of mercy, the apostles were greatly honoured and greatly favoured. In their case was the saying made good, *one soweth and another reapeth*. The seed of that harvest which was to be reaped now, had been sown during many preceding ages. Moses had laboured in it, when he conducted the Israelites to the field in which it should grow, and when he planted the law in preparation for the gospel which should follow. David and Isaiah, and the other prophets had also laboured, and tended the springing blade ; who prophesied of the grace that should come. But to these it was never permitted to say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” To these it was not allowed to proclaim the glad tidings, how “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself :” how, dispersing the long night of ignorance, he now commanded all men everywhere to “repent,” and “lay hold of everlasting life.” The gospel seed was sown, when that tradition was given to which the Samaritan woman alluded : *I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ*. But

the harvest was to be reaped, when it could be said, *I that speak unto thee am he.* And the fruit would be gathered, when those of the Samaritans who believed, and continued stedfast, should receive the end of this faith, even eternal life.

For this, as we should carefully observe, is the end, the object of all. For this, God prepared the field. For this, the Spirit tilled the field. For this, the prophets sowed. For this, Jesus went through his appointed labours. For this, the apostles at length put in their sickle; that immortal souls, that *our* immortal souls, might be a harvest to the glory of God, and repay the Redeemer's toil. How great must be the blessedness in store for souls thus *gathered unto life eternal*, and purchased at so high a cost! when both *he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together*, and no more blight or mildew, no more storm or tempest, shall endanger the harvest, now safely lodged in the garner of the heavenly husbandman? All will then unite in the same chorus, and the strain will be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise." "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."²

² Rev. v. 12; vii. 12.

LECTURE XXII.

THE FAITH OF THE SAMARITANS.

JOHN iv. 39—42.

39. *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

40. *So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them : and he abode there two days.*

41. *And many more believed because of his own word ;*

42. *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

All Scripture is profitable for instruction. And this account of the inhabitants of Sychar may serve a very important purpose. It furnishes a striking example of the two sorts of faith which may exist in the mind, and which it is highly needful to distinguish.

THE FIRST, is a belief grounded on the report of others. *Many believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

THE SECOND sort of faith goes further, and depends on personal experience and conviction. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed*

the Christ, the Saviour of the world. It will be useful to examine this.

The faith of the Samaritans, in the first instance, when they *went out from the city and came unto Jesus*, had its foundation in the report which the woman made. She had assured them that Jesus had proved himself to be acquainted with all the acts of her life. It could only be accounted for in one way. *Is not this the Christ?* Can this man, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, be any other than HE whom we were looking for, who was to come into the world?

They concluded that it must be so, and *believed at her saying.*

This is the foundation of all faith in Christ. It is far from being all that is meant by “receiving him and believing in his name:” but it is the needful basis on which all future faith may stand. We believe that a Saviour of the world had been promised: had been foretold by prophets: had been prefigured by types: had been expected by devout men: and at last appeared in man’s nature about eighteen hundred years ago. We believe that he did many miracles: healed the sick, restored the dead: taught an excellent doctrine, exhorted sinners to repent: suffered death upon the cross, but rose again from the tomb, and ascended to the place which he had left in the bosom of the Father. This we believe;—on the report of others;—on the report of those who lived at that time, and witnessed these things. They delivered these facts to their children and contemporaries: these

handed them down to the generation that came after ; and in this way they have always been believed by Christians, who could not possibly know the facts in any other manner, unless *the Christ* were to appear in every age. It was thus with the Samaritans. They believed first on the woman's report. They could not have known, for themselves, whether Jesus had declared to her the secret actions of her life. But she assured them so, and they believed her.

Now this is the sort of faith in which the inhabitants of a Christian country grow up. They know that they have been baptized in the name of Jesus. They know the principal circumstances of his life. They know that he suffered death upon the cross ; and they have a vague idea that his death was a great benefit to mankind.

Such is the belief of children ; and the belief of many who are no longer children goes no farther. The belief which they have is good, though not sufficient. They must believe that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ;" that he "died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."¹ And these things they can only believe on the testimony of those who witnessed them. If the people here had not attended to their country-woman, saying, *Come, and see a man, who told me all things that ever I did*, they would never have *heard him for themselves* at all.

But still we must bear in mind that this is only

¹ See 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

the beginning of that faith, by which, "being justified, we have peace with God." A person may believe all this, and feel no doubt of its truth:² and yet may be no way influenced by it in his heart and life. It is the same with belief in the existence of God. How few are found ready to deny that "there is one God!" And yet how few live as if they believed it; and either love, or fear, or reverence, or obey him? Nothing is more easy, and nothing more common, than to believe that Jesus was sent from God; that he was "approved as such by signs and wonders and mighty deeds," that he most unjustly suffered a cruel death:—and yet to have none of that faith by which men are justified before God; and of which Jesus so frequently declared, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." It is one thing to know a man to be an excellent physician; it is another thing to apply to him, and follow his counsel. So it is one thing to believe in the history of Jesus, as related in the Bible: and another thing to rely on him as "the Christ, the Saviour of the world," by whom alone we obtain health or salvation.

But to this real and justifying faith the Samaritans proceeded, being led on to it by their own inquiry and experience. *Now we believe, not for thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* On the testimony which the woman gave, they had besought him that he would tarry

² See James ii. 19.

with them. And he abode there two days. And during those two days, though his discourses are not preserved, we may feel sure what their subject was. He would tell them, that “except they repent, they must all perish.” But that they need not perish. “For God had sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but hath everlasting life.” These things he was often repeating, and those to whom he addressed them, cavilled at his words: or “went back, and walked no more with him.” But here was more of that “honest and good heart,” which the Lord opens, so that it “understands the things that are spoken.” So that *many believed because of his word*: and said, *We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

And all must be able to affirm the same, who have any scriptural right to peace or hope as being “reconciled to God” “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” They must have understood the description of Christ as suited to themselves, and the promises of Christ as offered to themselves. In infancy they had been enrolled within his covenant: in their youth they had named the name of Christ, and believed on their parent’s word, or their country’s creed. But now they have sought further, and learnt more, and themselves discovered that *this is indeed the Christ.* They can assume the language of the apostle, “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able

to keep what I have committed to him unto the great day.”

Let none rest, till they can say this in their own persons, as the feeling of their own hearts. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”

LECTURE XXIII.

A NOBLEMAN'S SON IS RESTORED FROM A DANGEROUS FEVER.

JOHN iv. 43—54.

43. *Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.*¹

44. *For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.*²

45. *Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.*³

46. *So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

47. *When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea*

¹ Passing in his way through Nazareth, which lay between Sychar and Galilee.

² See on Mark vi. 4; Luke iv. 24.

³ They attended the feast of the passover.

into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son : for he was at the point of death.

48. *Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

We have an example here, if examples were needed, how little riches can effect towards real happiness. They cannot confer it, because they can neither remove the causes of affliction with which the world abounds, nor do much to soothe them. This nobleman, whose son lay at the point of death, found nothing to tranquillise his distressed feelings, either in his honours or his wealth. Affliction did more for him than either. Affliction brought him a suppliant to the feet of Jesus.

The treatment which he received there, was not exactly the same which other suppliants received. St. Matthew relates, (viii. 5—13,) how “when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.” But here the petitioner met with a rebuke; though high in station, and though making his entreaty, not for a servant, but a son. Instead of answering, “I will come and heal him,” *Jesus said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

No doubt, in either case the answer was exactly that which was most suitable. We know that the centurion was a proper object of encouragement;

for he at once replied to our Lord, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus was well aware of this; "for he knew what was in man." And we may be equally sure that he read something in the heart of this nobleman, which made him less fitted for a prompt and unhesitating compliance. *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.* Now signs and wonders were part of the evidence of Jesus's divinity which should lead men to believe. But they were not the only proofs of the power in which he came. "Gracious words proceeded out of his mouth." The purity of his precepts and the authority of his doctrine showed that God was in those latter days speaking unto man by his Son.⁴ Perhaps the nobleman had appeared insensible to signs like these. Perhaps for this reason Jesus thought it good to humble him, instead of immediately declaring, "I will come and heal him." The man, however, like the Canaanite woman in a case somewhat similar, receives the reproof in a meek and quiet spirit: he opens not his mouth, makes no complaint or defence, but urges his request once more.

49. *The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*

50. *Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.*

⁴ See Heb. i. 1, 2.

The *man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him*. If there had been anything amiss before, any want of faith in his seeking the actual presence of Jesus, instead of saying, *Speak the word only, and my son shall be healed*: this was now removed. *He believed*. He exercised the same faith as St. Paul commends in Abraham; (Rom. iv. 20;) “He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

51. *And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

52. *Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.*

53. *So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.*

54. *This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.*

It is proper to remark here, that these healings of the body are emblems of the recovery of the soul. Jesus said to the anxious father, *Go thy way; thy son liveth*. Though this was spoken at the distance of a day's journey from the scene of the illness, it was soon found that the fever had been obedient to his command. It is the same with the restoration of the soul. Though he is in

heaven, and we who believe in him, and make our supplications to him, are on earth; he still will speak the word, and the sin which is repented of shall be pardoned; the power of Satan which threatens to destroy, shall be kept in subjection; the lusts which war against the soul shall be subdued. Only let there be the same sense of our own weakness; the same confidence in Christ's strength; the same earnestness in prayer "for grace to help in time of need."

It should also be kept in constant remembrance, that, in one sense, the case of this parent is the case of all parents. His necessity is their necessity, and his prayer should be their prayer. For, without Jesus, their child must likewise die.

Believing this, let them "ask in faith, nothing wavering." Let them ask at the font, when their infant is "received into the congregation of Christ's flock," that he will "mercifully look upon their child, wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost," and make him an "inheritor of his everlasting kingdom."⁵ Let them daily continue to entreat, that the good work which has been begun, may be carried on unto the end: and the child be kept "by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." We may humbly, but confidently, hope and trust, that children shall not finally perish, who are children of these prayers.

⁵ See Baptismal Service.

LECTURE XXIV.

A CRIPPLE IS HEALED AT THE POOL OF
BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 1—9.

1. *After this there was a feast of the Jews ; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*¹

2. *Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,² having five porches.*

3. *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

4. *For an angel went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

This place, where a number of diseased persons were collected together, too nearly resembles the picture of our moral world. What does the world contain, but what these porches of Bethesda contained? *A great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.* Impotent we are, unable to fulfil the commands of God ; not loving him with all our heart, nor our neighbour as ourselves. The

¹ So this feast, the Passover, required. See Deut. xvi. 16.

² That is, the house of mercy.

apostle has described our state; "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Blind too we are, as to our best and truest interests; and too often loving darkness rather than light; or boasting that "we see," when in truth we know nothing as we ought to know.

These moral evils, also, were brought on in the same way as the bodily evils mentioned in the history. Adam sinned; and with sin came death: and with death, all that leads to death: all disease, and pain, and infirmity. Again, Adam sinned, and the soul became corrupt: hence the sinful character of his posterity: hence their blindness in spiritual things, their enmity towards God: till he in his mercy lightens our darkness, and restores us to himself. Let us be thankful that there is a provision for this, of which the pool of Bethesda is the emblem.

The multitude of diseased persons lying there, were *waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

So too must the diseases of the soul be cured; healed from above: the *water must be troubled*; the heart must be moved with a sense of its condition and its danger, and this must come from the Holy Spirit: he must descend and prepare the soul to receive the remedy which Christ proposes, to apply the means which he prescribes, and by which it may be made whole of whatsoever disease it has.

5. *And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.*

6. *When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole ?*

7. *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool : but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.*

When sin is the disease to be removed, men are not always *willing to be made whole*. They do not feel the evil ; therefore they do not desire a cure.

It is very different in the case of a bodily disorder : that we do feel, and are eager to be rid of. There was no hesitation as to the wish of this unhappy patient. But he had little hope : he had no friend to assist him, and others continually *stepped down before him*. And this exhibits another symptom of our moral disease. This poor man had not strength to keep his turn, and they had not the justice to give it him. To step before another : to obtain some good for ourselves, without looking to other's interests, often by supplanting them—this is the way of the world. The gospel would change that evil way ; and bids us live, “in honour preferring one another :” and says, “Let no man seek his own, every man another's wealth.” And when the spirit of these precepts is more generally observed, the course of this world and the will of God will more nearly agree together.

8. *Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

9. *And immediately the man was made whole, and took*

up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.

Thus he who had no earthly friend, found that one greater than any earthly friend was here. What he had so long and so hopelessly waited for, Christ at once effected for him. Christ felt the pity which his fellow-creatures did not feel; and together with the sympathy to pity, he had the power to cure. *Immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked:* giving this evident proof of the completeness of his restoration.

I must now show, that the cure which was performed on the body of this cripple, is an example of the healing power which the same Lord exercises on the soul.

All mankind are not diseased, *halt, and withered* in their body, like those persons who were gathered at the side of the pool of Bethesda. In respect of bodily health and strength, there is a great difference among men.

There is no such difference as to the soul. Here all are by nature alike. "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. For that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified (if justified at all) freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We lately received it from his own mouth, "He that believeth not, is condemned already:"³ lies under the condemnation of his own natural and actual sin.

³ John iii. 18—36.

For the remedy of this miserable state, it pleased God to send his Son, that as many as believe in him might be freed from this condemnation. And he comes to the world, as he came to the pool of Bethesda. There he found those lying who were afflicted with diseases, and says to one, *Wilt thou be made whole?* So he comes into the world, the inhabitants of which are oppressed with sin; oppressed both by its present misery and its future consequences: and he says to all who hear “the Gospel of the kingdom,” Will ye be made whole?

We might suppose that all would be ready to reply, Thanks be to God for his condescending mercy! And in one sense all are ready to answer thus: there is no man who does not desire the pardon of his offences: no man who would not gladly be safe from the wrath of his Maker, the sentence of his Judge. If this were the whole offer, all would embrace it hastily. But they know that it goes further, and implies more: they know that it is an offer of deliverance from sin itself, as well as from the consequences of sin. *Wilt thou be made whole of thy plague of a sinful heart? Wilt thou be delivered from those works of the flesh against which God's wrath and indignation are revealed? “They that do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God:”* and therefore thou must be delivered from them before thou canst inherit that kingdom.

Alas! too many feel no need of such deliverance. These things give them no pain, no distress, no anxiety. And too many others, who cannot but

confess their need, have no real wish or desire for spiritual health. However they might be glad to be freed from danger, they are not willing to be freed from sin. They had rather indulge their sin, and risk the consequence: they have not faith enough to cut off the right arm, or pluck out the right eye—to abandon habits which have become part of themselves—rather than with all their guilt remaining to encounter the “tribulation and anguish revealed against every soul of man that doeth evil.”

Otherwise, the gospel would afford them the same comfort which was given in this history. Jesus saith unto the impotent man, *Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.* And such is his universal offer, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁴ His name is called Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins.”⁵

Let us, at least, inquire whether we have both understood this offer and accepted it. He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the consciousness of it in himself:⁶ and can tell whether he is looking up to him for that remedy of his soul’s disease, which the impotent man received in his crippled limbs at the pool of Bethesda.

⁴ Acts ii. 38.

⁵ Matt. i. 21.

⁶ 1 John v. 10.

LECTURE XXV.

NARRATIVE OF THE MIRACLE AT BETHESDA
CONCLUDED.

JOHN v. 10—14.

10. *The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.*

11. *He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.*

It was a just and natural reply on the part of this poor man. Who He was that had made him whole he wist not: but this he felt at once, that whoever had power to effect the cure, must also have authority to permit him to carry home the bed on which he was lying. But the Jews, instead of attending to the miracle, or learning the lesson which it taught, “sought to slay Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath day.”¹ We cannot, therefore, think so favourably of them, as to believe that they were led to censure the man from any proper feeling, any honest zeal for God’s honour. It were possible that they might have censured him, in a state of mind like that of our Lord himself, when he said, “Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.” In the same spirit they might have rebuked the man who made their Fa-

¹ Verse 16.

ther's day a day of ordinary labour. But their subsequent conduct shows that they were actuated by malevolence, and not by piety.

12. *Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?*

13. *And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.*

14. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

We need not conclude from this remark, that the man's disease had been a special judgment: Jesus takes the opportunity of declaring to him, that there is a judgment against sin, which must fall upon those who continue in sin; and more especially on those who continue in sin after mercy has been shown them, and the light manifested to them. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."²

Yet how is this command to be obeyed, *Sin no more*? Nature is not altered, temptations are not removed, because a disease is cured, or an affliction taken away.

He who issues the command, will also afford the power. Without his power, the cripple could not have risen, and taken up his bed, and walked. But he did this at the command of Jesus; did

² Heb. x. 26.

what he had been long striving to do in vain. And that he did it, was the proof of his cure. And such may be, and such must be, the case with the heart which is pardoned and reconciled to God through faith in Christ Jesus. It must give proof of the change wrought in it. It must rise "from the death of sin to the life of righteousness." It must leave in the pool where it has been washed, its unruly passions, its unsanctified desires, all that is displeasing to God, and unfit for heaven : and it must take up, instead, the various graces which adorn the doctrine of Christ ; must " add to faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity."

Indeed, what happened to this cripple at Bethesda, must happen, in substance, to all who partake of the benefit of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. He had felt his wretchedness ; had thought within himself how he might obtain relief ; and at last received it through the mercy of the Saviour.

So must every Christian reflect within himself : I have offended against Almighty God, and cannot appear before him in judgment. My nature is corrupt : so that " the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do." How can I obtain remission of sins past ? How can the stony heart be taken away, and be replaced by the tender heart which feels the love of God, and holiness ? One method alone is pointed out. " There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." He must recover me.

He must wash me from my sinfulness. He must strengthen me. He must lift me above the dust of this world, and enable me to keep the paths of righteousness: he must engraft upon me the fruits of the Spirit, approved of God, but not natural to the heart of man.

So it was with those to whom the gospel was first made known, and who had been living in all the evil of our unrenewed nature. "Some of you," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. vi. 9—11,) "were once adulterers, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners." But now, he proceeds, "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." In the name of the Lord Jesus they had laid aside their evil habits; had risen above the darkness in which they had been lying, and become able to walk before God in righteousness and holiness.

The difficulty is to feel the need of this; so to feel it, as to seek and apply the remedy. The cripple felt his need, but he had no hope of remedy. *Lord, I have no one, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.* For surely I would be made whole; but in my helpless, miserable state, what hope is there?

When any one feels this in respect to his soul, angels begin to rejoice over him. When any one feels—I would, indeed, gladly be cleansed from my sin: I do not cling to it, though it still adheres to me. But I have no one who shall enable me to overcome the evil dispositions of my heart, and the

evil habits of my life. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that I cannot do the things that I would.” “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

This is the state of mind when the offer of Jesus Christ, as conveyed in the gospel, is indeed glad tidings. He says, *Wilt thou be made whole?* He promises deliverance: he engages to supply all our need. And when the heart is convinced that “without holiness no man can see the Lord,” and that without “the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus” no man can attain unto holiness, we shall eagerly close with the offer, and “thank God for his unspeakable gift.” *Wilt thou be made whole?* That is my earnest desire. My earnest desire is to be purified from the corruption which I derived from Adam, and to become a child of God through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus.

Christ approves of the heart which thus moves towards him, and accepts his gracious invitation. He said to the diseased cripple, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” He says to the believing penitent, “Rise, thy sins are forgiven thee.” The stain of thy guilt is washed away. Being justified by faith, thou art at peace with God. *Behold, thou art made whole*; but *go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee*. The apostle says, “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”¹ Go, then, and for the remainder of

¹ 2 Peter ii. 21.

thy life walk before God in righteousness and holiness. Take thy affections from things below, and raise them to things above. Rise beyond the trifling concerns of this world, or rather so carry them on, as to make them serve towards thy eternal interests. This must be the proof of thy soul's health; as the strength with which he rose, took up his bed, and walked, was the proof that the cripple was healed, who had lain so long in the porches of Bethesda.

LECTURE XXVI.

JESUS REASONS WITH THE JEWS CONCERNING HIS AUTHORITY AND SPIRITUAL POWER.

JOHN v. 15—27.

15. *The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.*

16. *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*

17. *But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

Such is the reason which our Lord alleges for healing on the sabbath day. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* The Father does not restrain

the operations of his providence, but sends his rain and his sun on the sabbath as on other days, that the comfort and welfare of man may be promoted. I do the same. I do not allow a blind man to continue in despair, or a diseased cripple to languish unrelieved, because it is the sabbath day. I bid them anoint their eyes with clay, and they receive their sight; I bid them carry home the bed on which they have been lying, and they carry it: these works of mercy I perform, and the sabbath is no more profaned by them than by the shining of the sun.

By this argument he virtually affirmed, what he affirms elsewhere in plain terms, that he and the Father are one. So the people perceived, and were indignant.

18. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

22. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

The Jews had grounded their indignation against Jesus on a pretence of zeal for God's honour. He had *made himself equal with God*. If this their feeling had been sincere, it had been excusable. Jesus does not blame it; but calmly shows them, that if they wish to honour the Father, they must honour him; for he represents the Father. He did not come independently; he came in the Father's name: he did not act independently; *the Son can do nothing of himself*. What miracles he had done, he had done as one with the Father. And greater things than they had seen hitherto, were yet to come. They should see that as the Father hath life in himself, *even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*. For the Father *had committed all judgment unto the Son*: had given him complete authority, *because he is the Son of man*. They had already been witnesses of his power over the body; and the time was now at hand, when they should witness his power over the soul.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

25. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*

26. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;*

27. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*

Here Jesus repeats, what he had before asserted,

that he brought an offer of everlasting life to those who were in a state of death; and that all who should *hear his word, and believe in him who sent him*,—believe the Father's message,—should *pass from death unto life*. And there should be such : *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*.

Many important truths which are implied in the whole dispensation of the gospel, are collected here in one brief sentence. Those who are without Christ, are *dead*. Christ has power to *quicken* them. Those whom he quickens *shall live*.

1. Those who are without Christ in the world, are in a state which can only be adequately described as a state of death. Because they are useless as to all the great objects for which human life is given, as much as if they were already cold and inactive in the grave; useless to the service of God, useless to every spiritual purpose; and because being so, they may be described according to law as dead, condemned in the sight of God, and liable to his wrath.⁵ The man was in a state like this, who is represented by our Lord, (Luke xii. 19,) as thus communing with himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." What is such a life, as far as God, as the soul, or eternity are concerned, what but a living death?

⁵ See Eph. ii. 3—6.

2. To these Christ has the power of giving life, that they may rise out of the darkness in which they are lying. *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* His Spirit infused into their hearts gives them a new existence. For whereas they were before alive to this world and dead unto God, now they are “alive unto God,” and comparatively dead unto this world. And whereas otherwise their souls were left to perish, whilst their mortal bodies were alone considered; now they “mortify their members which are upon the earth,” and seek first and chiefly what may nourish and strengthen their immortal souls. This is LIFE; it deserves to be so called; and it is a new life, not that to which our carnal nature tends: and it is a life which Christ bestows and maintains, and by which he fulfils the promise, that to “as many as receive him, he gives power to become the sons of God.” Zacchæus, as described by St. Luke,⁶ was one of the first examples of this, when having been, “according to his former lusts in his ignorance,” accustomed to live to himself alone, he entered upon a new course, and began to live unto God when he resolved to be as earnest for heaven as he had hitherto been for this present world.

3. Those, then, who do thus *live*, are those who *hear the voice of the Son of God*, and come unto him “that they may have life.” Zacchæus did this; he received Christ joyfully, and passed from

⁶ Chap. xix.

death unto life. Others refused to do it: as the rich young man who went away sorrowing, when he found on what terms the offer of eternal life was made; and that he could only live unto God, by being dead unto this world. He indeed heard the voice of the Son of God with his outward ears, but it did not enter into his heart, and, like too many in all ages, “he went away.”

Thus are set before all to whom the gospel is proclaimed, “life and good, and death and evil.”⁷ Our hearts, examined as to their inward feelings, and compared with the habits of our life,⁸ can alone determine whether we ourselves *have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.* For this is certain, that if we have *passed from death unto life*, then we are “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁹

LECTURE XXVII.

THE RESURRECTION TO ETERNAL LIFE, OR ETERNAL DEATH, DECLARED.

JOHN V. 28, 29.

28. *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,*

⁷ Deut. xxx. 15.

⁸ See 1 John iii. and iv. throughout.

⁹ Rom. vi. 11.

29. *And shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

These verses declare the important fact, on which the whole of religion rests. As St. Paul argues, (1 Cor. xv. 29,) “ What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” Why do they live in the faith of one who, confessedly, died and was buried, “ if so be that the dead rise not?” “ Let us eat and drink ;” let us follow the devices and desires of our own hearts,—if we may die to-morrow, and die for ever. But, as the apostle proceeds, “ be not deceived :” *for the hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth*, and “ appear before the judgment-seat of God, to receive according to the things done in the body.”

“ But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?”

Without doubt, it is a wonderful thought, that the sea should cast up her dead, and that death and the grave should deliver up the dead that are in them, and that the soul should animate once more a body, which shall be to each individual as his own body. This is a matter which we are not concerned to examine closely. God reveals to us the fact. “ He who raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwelleth in us.” That these bodies will

undergo a great change, is certain. What is "sown in corruption," will be "raised in incorruption." "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." He that effects the whole, "shall change our vile bodies," and the "dead shall be raised incorruptible." But still it will be the same body that died: in the same sense as the corn which springs up in the field, or is ripening for harvest, is the same corn which was dropped into the ground, with a form altogether different. It will be animated by the same mind, the mind conscious of itself, conscious of its own thoughts and feelings. This mind God will again invest with a body, and to every mind his own body; according to that mighty energy which has all things within its power. No man can doubt this power, who contemplates himself; how fearfully and wonderfully he is made. The same Deity which made him what he is, can make him what he is to be, and what he is to remain for ever.

And in the fact here so plainly declared, the resurrection to life or death eternal, we have the explanation of whatever might seem surprising in the whole dispensation of the gospel. The Son of God is made flesh, and dwells amongst us. Great is the mystery. But is there not a cause, if *all that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation?* Do we reflect on what may be suffered, or what may be enjoyed, throughout eternity? And if we do, can we wonder that he who saw all in a state

of death, and knew in what that death would issue, should be so moved by the goodness of his divine nature as to humble himself, and “bear our sins in his own body,” that “by all means he might save some?” that as “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many might be made righteous?”¹

Should any be disposed to doubt what is here affirmed, the eternal happiness of the faithful, and the eternal misery of the wicked, let them turn their minds to the great fact which we all avow, the incarnation of the Son of God. Men are unwilling to believe that so much can depend upon the present time: they divert their thoughts from a subject which distresses them: and Satan is now ready to whisper, as he did of old, “Ye shall not surely die:” you may disobey the commands of God, you may neglect his revealed will; but you need fear no evil; “ye shall not surely die.”

Ask yourselves, then, would the Son of God have come in our nature, and have died in our nature, if there were no reality in what is declared to us concerning heaven and hell: if the kingdom of God were not inconceivably glorious, or if what is described as “outer darkness,” as “the lake of fire,” “the second death,” “the worm that never dieth,” meant nothing substantial, nothing very terrible—meant anything except the greatest imaginable misery?

¹ Rom. v. 19. See the whole argument.

Try then to live with the impression before your minds of that scene which these words represent. Consider the feelings which it would awaken in you, if you saw it actually taking place; the heavens passing away, the elements melting, the earth disappearing: but the dead, small and great, standing before God, to be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works. These things it is the business of faith to represent to us, before they happen, in order that when they happen we may be found ready. And we ought to stir up and encourage this faith. A Christian of former times was used to say, that the sound seemed continually in his ears, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment: the Judge is set; the books are opening; sentence is passing." And it is surely wise, if we believe in the resurrection as a doctrine, to bring it before our minds as a practical truth by which this life is to be governed. It will teach us to value time, and to redeem it: to restrain every unholy thought, and word, and action; and carefully to regulate that life, which will soon be narrowly examined by an all-seeing Judge.

LECTURE XXVIII.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, OF GOD, AND
OF THE SCRIPTURES, TO THE DIVINITY OF
JESUS.

JOHN V. 30—40.

30. *I can of mine own self do nothing : as I hear, I judge : and my judgment is just ; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

31. *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*

32. *There is another that beareth witness of me ; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.*

Jesus had been declaring great things, many of them new things : so that they marvelled. They were not merely things to be assented to, as abstract truths, or points of doctrine ; but they were truths which if admitted must govern the heart and life. He had been declaring himself equal with God. And this was not only a philosophical speculation : but if so, he must be believed and obeyed as God. He had been declaring the resurrection of the dead. This too might be admitted ; if it did not follow, that if we admit it, we must live as those who are to give account of the things done in the body, and to be recompensed according to the works, whether they be good or bad. When

a truth is to be followed by these practical consequences, the authority by which it is supported must be seen.

He therefore concludes his discourse, by showing the grounds of that authority. He had already asserted it, saying, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." This he had himself affirmed. But no one is received on his own unsupported word. *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true*; that is, is not to be at once received as true. Though it may be true, yet, according to the laws of evidence which men are obliged to establish on account of the deceitfulness which prevails, it requires further confirmation. So that he proceeds to appeal to three testimonies, by which they might be convinced that his witness was true.

First to that of John the Baptist. next, to that of the Father: and thirdly, to that of the Scriptures.

33. *Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.*

34. *But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.*

35. *He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.*

John bore the authority of a divine commission; a commission which was acknowledged. People of all ranks sought him; looked up to him for a while as a *burning and a shining light, and were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.* And

nothing could be clearer than the testimony which he gave, when “he saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me; for he was before me.”¹

2. The second testimony was greater still. “If we believe the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”

36. *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*

37. *And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.*

38. *And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*

The Father had borne witness to the Son, and was continually bearing it: *the works which he did, which the Father had given him to finish, bare witness of him, that the Father had sent him.* “If he had not done among them the works which none other man did,” they had been more excusable in rejecting him: for whosoever professes to have a message from God, must produce sufficient proof of the authority which he claims. But this he did produce: and they should have believed him for the very works’ sake.² If all had had the simplicity of Nicodemus, all would have acknowledged, like

¹ John i. 29, 30.

² John xiv. 11.

Nicodemus, that “no man could do the miracles which he did, except God be with him.”³

3. The third testimony to which Jesus appeals, is that of the Scriptures.

39. *Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.*

40. *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

The Scriptures concluded the evidence, and confirmed the whole. The Jewish people were bound to search these ; for in these they *thought they had eternal life* : and if they had searched them with true and candid heart, they would have proved to them what the star shining in the east proved to “the wise men ;” they would have led them to perceive that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, so that “believing, they might have life through his name,” might *come unto him, that they might have life.*

For consider what a Jewish inquirer would have discovered, had he followed the counsel given him, and *sought the Scriptures* for a testimony of Jesus. He would remember how Moses had said, that God would raise up unto them “a prophet from the midst of them, of their brethren, like unto him, unto whom they should hearken.”⁴ The question therefore would be, Is this HE that should come ? It would be then found, that all which the Scriptures pronounced concerning his birth, had

³ John iii. 2.

⁴ Deut. xviii. 15.

been complied with. It would be found that there had been the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." It would be found that, according to the language of Isaiah, "a virgin had conceived, and borne a son:" that this Son was of the line of David: was born in Bethlehem of Judea: was born at the very time when, according to the prediction of Daniel, devout men were looking for "the consolation of Israel:" and had been born with such signs preceding, attending, and following, as might well persuade them that this was "of a truth that prophet which should come into the world." Therefore the direct affirmation of John, who had declared him to be the Christ; and the testimony of the Father, who had borne witness to his beloved Son, and was still bearing witness by the miracles which he performed; would be confirmed and corroborated by an exact agreement with all which the Scriptures had foretold.

So just is our Lord's conclusion: *Ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.* Had his word been abiding in their knowledge, or a love of it in their hearts, they would have *come to him that they might have life.* But there was nothing in their character in common with that of the Father; nothing which led them, when they saw the Son whom he had sent, to look on him as precious and honourable. As Isaiah had foretold, they "saw no beauty in him that they should desire him."

Let their unbelief be a warning to us, "on

whom the ends of the world are come.” “ For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we have believed the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For we know, that “ he received from God the Father honour and glory,” when the *works which the Father had given him to finish*, bare witness of him. “ We have also a sure word of prophecy :⁵ if we *search the Scriptures*, we perceive that *they testify of him*. And these assurances are given to them “ that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that they may know that they have eternal life, and that they may believe on the name of the Son of God.”⁶ “ For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”⁷

LECTURE XXIX.

REASONS ARE ALLEGED, WHY THE JEWS REJECTED JESUS.

JOHN V. 41—47.

41. *I receive not honour from men.*

42. *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

⁵ See 2 Peter i. 16.

⁶ 1 John v. 13.

⁷ Heb. iii. 14.

43. *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not : if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive.*

44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ?*

Jesus had come into the world, as the Redeemer of the world. To the Jews, especially, he had first appeared, as the Messiah whom they had been expecting. That he might accomplish the purpose for which he came, he must be trusted ; be believed in. He showed them, therefore, in the former part of this discourse, that he had all the testimony in his favour which could either be required or granted ; he had the testimony of John the Baptist, he had the testimony of God himself, he had the testimony of their Scriptures. If they did not receive this testimony, there must be some reason for it ; something which perverted their minds, and prevented their seeing the truth which lay before them. And here he shows what that obstacle was. *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.* Ye do not love the things which God approves, or desire the things which God permits, or do the things which he commands. Ye have other love, other desires, other affections ; so that ye have nothing in common with him who comes *in the Father's name* : condemning what he condemns, and prescribing what he sanctions. *If another should come in his own name, him ye will receive* : for he would be of the world, and ye love the world : he, *coming in his own name*, would

“ savour the things of men :” and so do ye. This worldly, carnal spirit is a barrier between you and truth. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?* How can ye believe? how can ye attend to the proofs of my divinity, whilst there is in you a prevailing bias on the other side, whilst your minds are so swayed by earthly motives that the judgment is not free?

It is as true now as it was then, that before the mind can be brought to any practical faith in Christ, it must escape from the trammels of this world. Men must cease to care for *receiving honour one of another*. They must not be kept back and restrained by considering what others think or others practise, but must enjoy a liberty within themselves of forming a right judgment, and acting on what the judgment approves. Demetrius of Ephesus, for example, was not likely to attain a true estimate of the authority of the apostles, (Acts xix. 24,) when he began by saying that if Paul was listened to, “the craft by which he and the workmen of like occupation had their wealth, was in danger of being set at nought.” His mind was pre-engaged to his wealth, and could exercise no freedom of opinion. So with the Jewish people. The elders had decreed, that whosoever adhered to Jesus, “should be put out of the synagogue.” Before, therefore, a man could reasonably or justly decide whether he were the Messiah or no, he must be independent of the

opinion of the elders; ready, if needful, to forfeit it. If he sought *the honour which cometh from man*, he would be incapable of judging concerning Christ's title to honour, which was proscribed and rejected of man.

What was needful then, that a man might confess Jesus to be the Christ, is equally needful now, that men may live as true and consistent Christians. They must view the precepts of the gospel, unbiassed by the opinions and practices of those around them. It is a just saying, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If any man is not able to defy the reproaches which may be cast on him, or the interests which he may endanger, or the inclinations which he must combat, for the sake of living as a faithful disciple of Christ Jesus, he may in words acknowledge him, but he will "in works deny him." And this, alas! is very possible—such is the deceitfulness of the heart—while he may think himself secure. He may be as little aware of his own inconsistency, as the unbelieving Jews: and as much without excuse. They professed to follow Moses, and the words of Moses would condemn them. He professes to believe in Jesus, and the words of Jesus will convict him.

Our Lord proceeds to show this of the Jews.

45. *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.*

46. *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me.*

47. *But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words ?*

Thus the very foundation on which they were resting, and thought they stood secure, would fail and sink from under them. They “made their boast of God, and rested in the law,”¹ the law given by Moses. That very boast and confidence would supply the ground of their condemnation. For Moses wrote of Christ: taught the people to expect him: that Moses who said unto the children of Israel, (Acts vii. 37,) “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.” Besides which, the whole law which Moses appointed was but as a preparation, designed to lead men towards Him that should come.² This the Jews perceived not, because “their minds were blinded.” And “even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.”³

We wonder at this perverseness. Let us look at it as a fearful warning. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.” “But there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”⁴

¹ Rom. ii. 17.

² See Gal. iii. 19—24.

³ See 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 12.

LECTURE XXX.

THE DISCIPLES ARE COMMANDED TO GATHER UP THE REMAINING FRAGMENTS, AFTER FIVE THOUSAND PERSONS HAD BEEN MIRACULOUSLY SUPPLIED WITH FOOD.

JOHN vi. 1—13.

1. *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.*

2. *And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.*

3. *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.*

4. *And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*

5. *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat ?*

6. *And this he said to prove him : for he himself knew what he would do.*

7. *Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

8. *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother saith unto him,*

9. *There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes : but what are they among so many ?*

10. *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now*

there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11. *And Jesus took the loaves ; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down ; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*

12. *When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*

13. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.*

This was one of the occasions when our Lord saw fit to exercise his power, in order to supply the wants of those who followed him, and heard his words. He refused to do this in his own behalf in the wilderness : but these sheep must not be allowed to go empty away.

He seems here to give an intimation that nothing is lost by earnestness in religion ; that they who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, shall find other things added to them, according to their need. Without changing the order of nature, it proves so in the order of Providence. “Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

The concluding remark is pointed and peculiar. *Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost.* So forcibly is this commanded as to require particular attention. Notwithstanding the plentifulness of the provision, and the ease with which it had been supplied ; yet the fragments are to be gathered up, that nothing be lost or wasted.

All classes of men are concerned in this precept. The RICH are concerned in it. He who uttered it was rich : he had shown himself rich in power, beyond all human wealth. He proves by his conduct, both on this and on other occasions, that those who are blessed by the bounty of Providence are intended to enjoy the gifts bestowed on them. But he prohibits all waste and extravagance. He suffers nothing to be squandered or thrown away which might improve the condition or assist the comfort of others.

The POOR too are concerned in it, who often waste more, in proportion, than the rich, upon what is utterly needless and superfluous. There are few who, according to their situation in life, might not be in what are called easy circumstances, if they had always attended to the maxim, *that nothing be lost*, nothing wasted by being spent unnecessarily or unprofitably.

But we may carry this further than merely as a lesson of frugality. There are other fragments, besides those of our daily bread, or daily income, which we are here taught to gather up and save.

1. There are fragments of TIME.

Though there is but one thing of real importance to be done, very few persons can bestow the principal portion of their time on that great object. The main part of life cannot be spent in hearing, or reading, or meditating upon eternity. It must be employed in active business of some sort or other. But meanwhile our hearts must be fixed, through all this active business, on the grand con-

cern; on that which is beyond; on the end of our faith, the salvation of the soul. We are travellers; we are on a journey; we have many interests on the road; we have much to call for our attention as we pass along: but after all, *the object* is not the road, or the interests of the road; but the journey's end.

For this purpose, the duty is to *gather up the fragments* of our time, *that nothing may be lost*. Notwithstanding all the labours, all the active duties which are indispensable, how many hours in every week are commonly spent in sloth, in idle conversation, in pursuits which profit not! If those fragments were collected together for a week, or a month, or a year, what good purpose they might serve! As multitudes might be rich, who now are poor, if they had carefully husbanded the resources which God had put into their hands: so multitudes, who are ignorant, might be rich in the most precious knowledge, if they had put to good account the moments which they have wasted and misapplied. Many a poor man would be happy to redeem, at the close of life, the sums which in his youth he has thrown away: and many an ignorant man, in the decay of his strength, has still more reason to lament the time which he once neglected, when he might have learnt to become "wise unto salvation." A slight excuse is enough for a man whilst death seems distant. He quiets his conscience while he says, I am busy, I am hard working, I am constantly employed; and God is not "austere:" he will not expect much, where little has

been given. But this is seen at last to be a vain device of Satan, when death actually comes, and finds the soul unprepared; much business done, but none of that which was most needful; none of that which might have been performed, if all the fragments of time had been gathered up, and employed for the purpose which they are given to serve.

2. Another hint of exhortation may grow out of this same precept. If ye profess to be servants of Jesus Christ, gather up all your opportunities of showing your zeal for his service; let nothing be lost, by which you can display your love for him, and your desire to please him. Some may have much of this power, and some less; but all may find some fragments both of talent and opportunity, if they are careful to seize them. How few, who are ignorant, would remain without instruction; how few that are thoughtless, would continue without warning; if all were careful to make the most of their means of usefulness!

And is there no encouragement? He to whom this service is paid, “is not unrighteous, to forget your labours of love:” he will gather up the smallest fragments of service which you may have employed in his cause, he will let nothing be lost of obedience to his will. All will be set to your account at the great day. And though you will not venture to look back upon such works as grounds of acceptance, or as entitling you to reward; he will receive them as tokens of faith and love—such tokens as are agreeable to our hea-

venly Father. “For in this is the Father glorified,” that they who are his adopted children through Christ Jesus, “bring forth much fruit;” and “abound in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

LECTURE XXXI.

THE DISCIPLES, OVERTAKEN BY A STORM, ARE
RELIEVED BY THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.

JOHN vi. 14—21.

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

The power which the Lord had displayed, in the manner before related, convinced the persons who witnessed it that he came with divine authority. And we might have hoped that, being thus convinced, they would hasten to him, and learn that which it was the business of a prophet to teach—the will of God, and his counsels as concerning themselves. But their views were bounded by things present, not raised to things above: and

they see in the power of Jesus nothing beyond the means of temporal advancement or prosperity. They do not say, *This prophet* can tell us heavenly truths; but *This prophet* can exalt us to wealth and power.

It was not, however, for such a purpose that the prophet should come into the world.

15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*¹

16. *And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,*

17. *And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.*

18. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.*

19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.*

20. *But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.*

21. *Then they willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

Had the disciples undertaken this voyage without instructions from their Master, we might have supposed that the difficulties which they encountered, *by reason of a great wind that blew*, were intended as a warning, to correct their rashness. But we learn from the other evangelists, that the voyage was undertaken at his express command. And yet they were in trouble. We are reminded,

¹ Matt. xiv. 22—33; Mark vi. 46—52.

then, that God's people are not exempt from trouble, the common lot of man, even when they are employed upon their Master's business. Their privilege is, that in their trouble they have "a very present help" which does not belong to others. On this occasion even the elements change their nature, rather than the disciples should be left comfortless. *They see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship ; and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I ; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship ; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

Now this may be taken in a further sense. The disciples willingly received their Lord ; and immediately their object was attained. Many things which are difficult, nay, impossible to ourselves, become easy when we are relieved by his aid, and strengthened by his strength. With him all things are possible. Sorrows are cheered, and trials lightened by his presence. But it is still more, that when he draws nigh, the soul is enabled to resist passion, to overcome sin, to gain the victory over Satan.

This is an experiment which is often tried. Multitudes have resolved to break off their evil habits ; convinced that such habits are misery here, and destruction hereafter. But their better resolutions have always fallen through ; they have yielded to temptation, and gone on from bad to worse. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ?" No : the sinner is under

Satan's power : led captive by him at his will : " corrupt nature makes him an easy prey. What then shall we do ? The resource, the only resource, is to seek for one who is stronger than Satan, and profit by his assistance. And that ONE is Christ. He came into the world "to destroy the works of the devil." He himself did conquer him, and he will enable his followers to conquer him. (Luke xi. 21.) " When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

Here then the case is like that of the disciples. *They received Jesus into the ship, and the wind ceased.* And so let the man who is under the dominion of sin, receive Christ into his heart, and he shall be enabled to overcome the tempests which rage within his bosom, and by which he may have been long tossed, like the troubled sea. Let the proud and haughty man commit himself to him who was " meek and lowly in heart ;" his pride shall cease ; he shall " be clothed with humility," and learn what it is to " esteem others better than himself." Let the impure and sensual do the same ; and they shall be enabled to mortify those affections and lusts, which " war against the soul." " Sin shall have no more dominion over them." So it was with the Corinthian converts ; we know what they had been : as St. Paul reminds them, " Such were some of you : " that is, they had lived in the indulgence of all those evils to which

corrupt nature is inclined. “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”² Ye have received him into your heart, with whom Satan cannot dwell, and over whose disciples Satan cannot prevail. He “delivers you from the body of this death,” and you are not “brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members.”³

It may not, perhaps, be with every one, as it was with the apostles, whose ship was *immediately at the land* for which they were bound. This is not often granted. The contest may be long, and slow, and painful. But only let the contest be continued, and the end is certain. There is no corruption which may not be overcome by a steady contemplation of the cross of Christ, and the representation which it exhibits of holiness and mercy. Take your sin to that, and crucify it there.

Those who, like the apostles, have attached themselves to Christ Jesus as their Lord, find in this history fresh reason to approve their choice. He is theirs, who has alike the will and the power to protect and comfort them. He may suffer the tempest to arise, and the storm to alarm them for a while; but it is not without a purpose. He will not permit it to overwhelm or injure them. That takes place, which is beautifully described by the Psalmist: “He commandeth, and raiseth the

² I Cor. vi. 11. ³ See Rom. vii. 22—25, and viii. 1—14.

stormy wind. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet : so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”⁴

LECTURE XXXII.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST DECLARED TO BE THE WORK REQUIRED OF GOD.

JOHN vi. 22—29.

22. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone ;*

23. *(Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks ;)*

24. *When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.*

25. *And when they had found him on the other side of*

⁴ Psalm cvii. 25—30.’

the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ?

26. *Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed.*

Had these persons sought Jesus, and taken even greater pains to find him, and join his company, because they perceived by his miracles that he was “come from God,” and “had the words of eternal life ;” they would have done what was wise and prudent and praiseworthy. But he had reason to know, that they were more anxious about provision for the body than the soul, and that the uppermost desire in their minds was the desire of being miraculously supported by him. There was another support which he would give, which would avail when the body needed it no longer. There was another support which they would want, when nothing else could profit them. This he exhorts them to *labour*,¹ to work for, and they should not labour for it in vain. He was at hand who should give it them, and *God the Father* had set *his seal* to his power. *Him hath God the Father sealed.* We seal the deed, which we accredit as our own, and by which we mean to stand. God had set his seal to Jesus as his Son, by the scriptures which

¹ Ἐργάζεσθαι, the same word which is used in the succeeding verse.

prophesied of him, by the voice which bore testimony to him, by the supernatural works which he was daily performing. For that then which he could give, *the meat which endureth unto everlasting life*, for that they should labour.

This leads them to ask a question, which we might expect every man to ask who may come to years of understanding.

28. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ?*²

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

A plain and obvious reply, suited to the inquirers of every age. You desire to *do the works of God*;—to fulfil that which he expects of you. This is as it should be, that the creature should perform the work assigned him by his Creator. Nor is that work doubtful. He has sent his message; he has commissioned his own Son to deliver it; and he requires you to believe him. “This is his commandment, that ye should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

As this is a sentence not belonging to the Jews alone, but to all whom the sound of the gospel reaches, it is right to stop awhile and inquire, whether we in this respect are working the works

² *The works of God*—those works which he requireth, and which he alloweth.

of God. Do we *believe on him whom he hath sent?*

He came to tell us, that in ourselves, and our natural condition, we are lost: lost through that sin which Adam brought upon the world, and of which he bequeathed to his posterity both the guilt and the penalty. “For in Adam all die.” “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

He came to tell us, that by the blood which he shed upon the cross, the ransom which he paid there, the sacrifice he then offered,—this sin has been atoned for, this guilt may be taken away, and the sinner restored to the favour of his God. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”³

He came to tell us, that this atonement is imparted, this benefit made over to those who receive its Author for what he was sent to be: receive him in the affection and devotion of their hearts as the Redeemer by whom their souls are ransomed, are made acceptable to God, and endowed with everlasting life. As was declared in the last chapter, (v. 24,) “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

He came to tell us, that “every man who hath

³ Rom. v. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 22.

this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure ;” is “ renewed in the spirit of his mind ;” “ mortifies his members which are upon the earth ;” and gives all diligence, that he may not be idle, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but may “ be fruitful in every good work unto all well-pleasing, being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, which are to the glory and praise of God.”

This he reveals : to the truth of this revelation God the Father hath set his seal : and to believe this, is the work which he would have us do.

To the question, then, which an awakened mind is anxiously led to ask, How shall I be reconciled to God, and live more conformably to his will ?—to this question it would not be a proper reply to say, in the first place, “ Do justice, love mercy ;” “ give alms of thy goods ;” “ keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” These indeed are *the works of God*, the works which he requires : but the first thing that he requires is, that we *believe on him whom he hath sent* : and then go forth in the spirit of that faith, and in obedience to his word, to walk before him in righteousness and holiness. It is only through that faith that God will receive our works : only through that faith that we can so perform them that they shall be acceptable to him.* We must first be grafted

* Art. xiii. “ Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ.”

upon the right stem, and become branches of the true vine, before we can bring forth fruit pleasing to God through his Spirit working in us.

To this, then, look constantly and habitually, as to the foundation. See that it is securely laid. Have you a just sense of your own exceeding misery, as shown in the estrangement of the natural heart from God; and of God's exceeding mercy, as shown in the incarnation of his Son? To increase this sense, of helplessness on the one side, and of mercy on the other, is the way to "abound in the works of the Lord." No principle of holiness is so strong, as that arising from the atonement which he made for sin: no principle of charity so cogent, as "the love of Christ constraining us" to imitate his wonderful example, and to comply with the declarations of his will. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." ⁵

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 14.

LECTURE XXXIII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE BREAD OF LIFE; AND REVEALS THE WILL OF HIS FATHER CONCERNING THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

JOHN vi. 30—40.

30. *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

Jesus, in what was last read, had demanded from those with whom he was discoursing, faith and allegiance; declaring that this was the work expected of them by the Father, that they should *believe on him whom he had sent*. They, in return, require a sign, a proof that he was sent of God. *What sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe thee?* And the sign to which they refer, seems to imply that they were still looking for that temporal support which had been lately given, when the multitude was provided with food. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert*. Moses showed this sign of his divine commission: as the Scripture relates, *he gave them bread from heaven to eat.*¹ And this affords to our Lord an occasion of explaining the spiritual purposes of his mission, and the spiritual nature of the benefit which he offered

¹ Neh. ix. 15.

them. It was not heavenly life which was supported by the bread which Moses gave: but heavenly bread indeed was set before them now.

32. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

33. *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

34. *Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*

35. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

On a former occasion, Jesus had employed the metaphor of water, to describe the refreshment and the spirit with which he would invigorate the soul. An allusion to the manna which supported the Israelites in the wilderness, now furnishes him with another example leading to a like purpose. He is the water of life, and he is the bread of life. Water and bread are needful to the body: and he is as water and as bread to the soul. But with this difference, that as the literal water and bread furnish but a temporary supply which is soon exhausted, he furnishes that strength to the soul which shall never fail it in time or in eternity. *He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

But this was a benefit which must be sought, that it may be enjoyed; and that it may be sought, must be desired. And these, as yet, had felt no such desire.

36. *But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.*

37. *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

38. *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

39. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

40. *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Most important, most interesting, are the truths which are here disclosed. Most comforting the assurance which is conveyed.

Those that come to Christ, and believe in him, are described, *as given to him of the Father*. This alludes to that secret preparation of the heart, which is “ of the Lord :” of which we know little, except as we see its effects : when we find some so qualified and disposed, that when the “ redemption that is in Christ Jesus” is set before them, they close with it and follow him, whilst others neglect or reject him. Those that receive the word with an honest and true heart, and “ are ordained to eternal life,”² believe. And those who thus believe, are *given to Christ of the Father* : who has engaged, in his mysterious covenant, to “ give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.”³

The preaching of St. Paul at Athens furnishes an example : and its copy may be found in every

² Acts xiii. 48.

³ Ps. ii. 8.

congregation or collection of persons where the gospel is proclaimed. (Acts xvii. 32.) “When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”

Damaris, then, and Dionysius, and others with them, formed a separate class from those who either mocked at Paul's doctrine, or deferred all thought of it. They *came to Christ*, whom Paul was making known, whose doctrine he was preaching. And their *coming* was a proof that they were given to him of the Father. *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.* Why the Father gave him these, and did not give him the whole assembly, we shall never know on this side the grave. But of this we are sure, that “the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and that there is no respect of persons with him.”

And for those who have come to Christ—for those, for example, who in this Christian land, having been committed to him in baptism, have renewed in their own hearts the engagements of that covenant—how consoling is the thought, that they are objects of interest to their Father which is in heaven, who has given their soul into the charge of his beloved Son. And he, too, has added his own promise, *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* Has any one faith to come unto me, to believe in me, to commit his eter-

nal salvation to my care? I will in no wise reject him, however sinful and guilty he may have been, however corrupt and frail he may still be.

So that there is nothing to deter or discourage in the idea, that those who come unto Christ, are given unto him by the Father. Does any person feel such a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, as willingly and thankfully to accept the offer made, and appropriate to himself the ransom paid by Christ? Then he has within himself an evidence that he is one of those whom the Father hath given unto the Son. Then he has within himself a proof that it is the Father's will that he should enjoy his heavenly kingdom. For this is his will, *That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life.* To see the Son, is to perceive his divine virtue and power; to recognise him, as made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And to *believe in him* is to apply that virtue and power personally to ourselves. If it be so with you; if you perceive Jesus to be indeed the Son of God; if you believe in him and rely on him for salvation, then you need go no further to inquire into the Father's will concerning you. The faith which you profess, and are conscious of, is the token of *his will*. No other could be given, no other ought to be required. Be satisfied with this, and rejoice with thankfulness. Cherish the faith which has drawn you to the Saviour, and ascribe it to "the giver of every good and perfect gift:" but do not presumptuously

search, why God hath made you to differ from another, or another from you. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Ought we to be surprised, if at present much appears inscrutable and incomprehensible? Rather adopt the words of David: “I have not exercised myself in great matters, which are too high for me. I have refrained my soul, and kept it low. Yea, my soul is as a weaned child.”⁴ Nay, one greater than David has said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”⁵

LECTURE XXXIV.

JESUS DECLARES THAT FAITH IN HIM IS GIVEN
OF GOD.

JOHN vi. 41—46.

41. *The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.*

42. *And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?*

43. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.*

44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which*

⁴ Ps. cxxxix. 1, 2.

⁵ Matt. xi. 25.

hath sent me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day.

45. *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

46. *Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

Instead of receiving the words of truth with due reverence, *the Jews murmured at them.* The Lord warns them not to invent objections, or listen to cavils. Such a spirit is totally inconsistent with that grace of God which bends the heart towards revealed truth. And though *no man can come unto Christ unless the Father draw him*, there are states of mind which remove them to a greater and a greater distance from him. This, he intimates, is no new doctrine, but such as the prophets had made familiar to them. *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*¹

A truth is declared here, which many are very unwilling to admit ; and which others pervert, as they do also other scriptures, to their own destruction.² *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* “The natural man receiveth not the things of God.” The heart by nature is so filled with corrupt thoughts and desires, that it cannot come and surrender itself to Christ :

¹ Is. liv. 13. “ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord : and great shall be the peace of thy children.

² 2 Pet. iii. 16.

it will be turned away from him by envy, as in the case of his brethren ; by covetousness, as in Judas ; by pride, as with the Pharisees ; by love of worldly things, as in the young ruler. *Therefore, as we read in ver. 65, therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.* The Spirit of God the Father must so subdue the natural disposition of the heart, and must influence it with such humble feelings and godly fear, as shall draw it towards Him who offers salvation to the meek and contrite, and opens the kingdom of heaven to those who enter it as little children. And all such *are taught of God*, have this repentance and submission from his grace.

Therefore when it afterwards happened that some of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him, it was, that they were not *drawn of the Father*. On the other hand, Peter and the rest refused to leave him, saying, Lord, to whom shall we go ? because it was *given them of the Father*.

Were, then, those who did leave him, on this account, free of blame ? The Father did not draw them onward to repentance and faith. Is this laid to their charge ? St. Paul has proposed the difficulty. “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault ? For who hath resisted his will ?”³

Certainly, if God were as man is, and there were no difference between the nature of his power, and the nature of man’s power, we could not comprehend how this might be. If one man

³ Rom. ix. 19.

who has complete power over another, obliges him to act, or prevents his acting, that man does not act according to his own wishes. Superintendence, in that case, is compulsion. But it need not be so with God. He whose wisdom is perfect, and power infinite, may have means of drawing the heart, so that the person drawn shall still have freedom, and the person not drawn by him shall still be without reply.

When Jesus, for example, said to Zaccheus, “Zaccheus, come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house, he came down and received him joyfully.” And this, we know, he could not have done, unless he had been *drawn by the Father*.

Now if an earthly being who had power of life and death over Zaccheus, had thus compelled him, there would be no room for choice and inclination of his own. But “with God all things are possible :” and therefore it was possible for him so to draw Zaccheus as to leave his own choice free ; and so not to draw the young ruler, when he went away from Jesus sorrowing, as to leave upon his own head the guilt of his refusal. Every one who has attended to the movements of his own heart, has felt such freedom, whether in yielding to the grace of God, or in resisting it.

But we do not pretend to clear up the mysteries which are connected with the grace of God in the heart of man. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever.”⁴

⁴ Deut. xxix. 29.

St. Paul does not argue with the gainsayer, but silences him : “Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou formed me thus?” Neither does St. John deny that there is mystery, nor endeavour to explain it, when he distinctly says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”

And is this any reason for distress or for despair? Surely, if rightly considered, it is a matter of comfort and encouragement. “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;” and that I can no more *come unto Christ*, and “continue in his word,”—that is, redeem my baptismal vows, and make the covenant my own,—*except the Father draw me*, than I can turn the course of the wind or of the stream. I am told this in scripture, and it agrees with my experience. But why should this affect or grieve me? I have also the promise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally :”⁵ and I am sure that there is no unrighteousness with him,⁶ that he should refuse his Holy Spirit to those that ask him.⁷ Why should a man complain, however indigent, if he knows that there is a treasury at hand for his supply? Rather let him rejoice, that he has this help to relieve his wants, this strength to aid his weakness. He has the support of God; this gives him confidence. He has no power of his own; this makes him humble and dependent: the proper feeling for him, his best security, in this state of danger and of trial.

⁵ James i. 5.⁶ Rom ix. 14.⁷ Luke xi. 13.

LECTURE XXXV.

JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF TO BE THE BREAD
OF LIFE.

JOHN vi. 47—58.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

48. *I am that bread of life.*

49. *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.*

50. *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*

51. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

Here the Lord again takes up the metaphor which he had used before, and declares himself to be the *bread of life*: that is, the support and nourishment of the soul. The Israelites, no doubt, had formerly been fed with manna in the wilderness: it nourished the body for a while, but there was nothing in that food which profited beyond the present life; whereas, whoso came to Christ for nourishment, should never die. He that believeth on him hath everlasting life. For he was come to *give his flesh for the life of*

the world. The life of the world was forfeited; and he gave his flesh, his human nature, to death, that as many as believe in him might be restored from death to life. All were dead, and he died for all.

This, however, was a mystery which at present they could not comprehend. He “told them before,” that when it should be accomplished, they “might remember that he told them of it.” He left the writing, that when the light was thrown upon it, it might be seen, and read, and explained. All as yet was dark and mysterious.

52. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

The discourse had begun upon the subject of the manna. This the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness collected daily, and lived upon it as their food. What the manna was to them,

such must the body and blood of Christ be to those who believe in him. It must be inwardly received as their daily food, their constant support. *For his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.* The doctrine of his body broken, and his blood shed for man, admitted into the mind and digested there, is mixed up with all the thoughts, and animates all the motions of the heart. It becomes part of that by which man's spirit is preserved. It furnishes the same support to the weak and labouring soul, which ordinary food supplies to the frail and exhausted body.

For example, (1 Kings xix.) we read of Elijah, that worn out by his journey, when flying from the revenge of Jezebel, he lay down in the wilderness; and "requested for himself that he might die." But the angel of the Lord came once and again, and touched him, and said, "Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that bread forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

And this is but a specimen of the way in which the Christian's strength is recruited when he feeds upon the body and blood of Christ. A sense of sin lies heavy upon his soul: he feels himself condemned and guilty before God, and labours under a burthen which is "grievous and intolerable." But he finds refreshment in the body of Christ, bruised for his offences: he has a cordial in the blood of Christ, which was shed upon the cross for those very transgressions which weigh

him down. He drinks in the thought, that this blood was poured out for sin as a sacrifice which God has engaged to accept; and in this knowledge he is comforted.

Again, if the Christian, like Elijah, feels the journey or life “too great” for him, harassed by the corruptions of the flesh, and the snares of the world, and the wiles of the devil; he is strengthened and supported by remembering that the Son of God was clothed in that same flesh and suffered in that same flesh for him, though “without sin:” and that having been “tempted in all points like as we are, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” This enables him to rise, and go upon the strength of this consoling truth, and sustain his journey “towards the mount of God.” *He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

In this way, Christ crucified for him, Christ strengthening and supporting him, is so received into his heart, that Christ *dwells in him, and he in Christ*; Christ is one with him, as he with Christ, and as Christ with the Father. *This is that bread which came down from heaven*: not as the forefathers of these Jews did eat manna, and were dead: *he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*. This spiritual food shall be a source of strength within him, supporting him to everlasting life. It gives him vigour for the appointed time of his earthly journey:—it feeds him when earthly food can no longer sustain his body, in the hour of sickness and of death:—it will be life to the disembodied spirit when it leaves its earthly tenement: it will

be life to that body which shall be raised incorruptible at the last day.

No wonder then, that Christ has called himself the *Bread of life*: no wonder, that he should have ordained a remembrance of himself, which commands us to take and eat of his body which was given for us, and to drink of his blood which was shed for the remission of our sins. No wonder that he has said, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* As the body, if in a healthy state, takes delight in its salutary food: so if the soul is really quickened into life by the Holy Spirit, it will delight in the blood of Christ, and feed upon the remembrance of his death. It will seek its habitual support from this, and from nothing else. Whoever looks to any wisdom but that of Christ to guide him, to any righteousness but that of Christ to justify him, to any strength but that of Christ to sustain him in life, in death, or in eternity—of him it may be justly said, in the prophet's language, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside."¹ But he that feedeth on Christ, and makes his incarnation, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, and his intercession, the daily nourishment of his soul, *even he shall live by him*: and prove it to be faithfully and truly promised, *He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

¹ Is. xliv. 20.

LECTURE XXXVI.

MANY OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM HIM AND HIS APOSTLES.

JOHN vi. 59—71.

59. *These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.*

60. *Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*

61. *When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?*

62. *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*

63. *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

64. *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*

65. *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, That no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

66. *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

It must be owned that of the things which Jesus had said, there were some which must have been, at present, *hard sayings*. It could not yet

be comprehended, how the mystery of his incarnation is food to the believing soul; how his blood shed upon the cross is as a cordial to the penitent heart, or how faith can produce such an union between the redeemed and the Redeemer, that he dwelleth in them, and they in him. The whole mystery of godliness must be developed, before this could be rightly conceived or fully imbibed: and the Spirit must descend, and give life to the words which spake of these secret things.

Were, then, those disciples justified, who *from that time went back, and walked no more with him?* Surely not. They had seen what might have taught them to trust in him. They should have continued to attend to his instruction, and listen to his warnings; and might have assumed that what they knew not then, they should come to know hereafter.

Indeed it commonly happens that the doctrines of the gospel are gradually comprehended: open by degrees upon the soul, as the rising sun when it disperses the shades and mists of night, and discovers first one distant and obscure object, and then another, till the whole prospect is made clear. Is then a man at liberty to turn his back upon these doctrines, because he cannot at first perceive their truth and excellence? Should he not rather study, inquire, examine: compare together the different parts of scripture, and observe how all lead to one point, and form one great argument? And when he has done this, the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he will learn

to comprehend those things which might once appear *hard sayings*: he will learn to feed on the mercy of the incarnation, to seek nourishment in the precepts of the gospel, and to find, in the blood of the cross, refreshment to his soul. He will understand that HE is justly termed the bread of life, who gives the soul a new existence, and enables it to breathe a purer air, and to have its conversation in heaven.

This was the case with the apostles themselves. At the time, they did not comprehend the full scope of the words spoken, any more than those who left the Lord's company, *and walked no more with him*. It was the work of the Spirit afterwards to impart the purpose of his coming in the flesh, and explain the real nature of his kingdom. But this they had seen, that the power which he exercised must be the power of God. They had heard too with astonishment the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth: his spiritual precepts approved themselves to their hearts. They felt that to be "poor in spirit" is suitable to man; that holiness must be needful for those who would "see God:" that meekness, and mercy, and charity, and moderation, are excellent virtues, and he who inculcated them, worthy of being listened to:—this their reason perceived, though they might not yet perceive how they might attain these qualities through dependence on him who recommended and prescribed them. But what they did know and understand, made them desire to know more; what they did believe, in-

clined them to believe more; Jesus taught them “as one who had authority;” and therefore they adhered to him, even though many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67. *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?*

68. *Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

69. *And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

70. *Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*

71. *He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.*

It is possible therefore to hear the words of eternal life, and be constantly under the sound, and yet remain unmoved or unconverted by them. How needful to take heed, “lest the heart be hardened,” as that of Judas, “through the deceitfulness of sin.”

The use to be made of this, and every other instance of hypocrisy or apostasy, of going away from Christ, or walking unworthily of his faith,—is to show us our own weakness and danger. We, like the apostles, say by our profession, that *we believe and are sure that he is that Christ, the Son of the living God*. And yet, how prone are we to go away from him? While he was on earth, to come to him, was to join his party, to attend his personal instructions: and to go away, was to walk no more with him. Now that he is in heaven, to come to him is a movement of the heart,

and to remain his disciples, is to take his precepts as the rule of our life and conversation. So that those may be justly said to go away from Christ, who in their practice disavow their baptismal obligations; who neglect what he has taught, and expect eternal life on other terms than those which the gospel lays down. And of these, alas! how great the number! How lamentably is the prediction verified, “Many are called, but few chosen!”

Yet at that time when *many went back and walked no more with him*, there were others who, notwithstanding that evil example, and other sore temptations, still adhered to him as *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. It is the same still. And we are as much obliged to choose between those who go away, and those who remain stedfast in the faith, as they were. May God incline us to choose aright!

For well is it said, *To whom shall we go? To whom instead of him, who spoke that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen? To whom instead of him, whom God the Father hath sealed, that he might give eternal life to as many as believe in him? To whom instead of him, who bore our sins in his own body, that he might bring us to God? To whom instead of him, whom God hath made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption? Will ye also go away?* Let us reply in the conviction of our heart, and affirm it by the devotion of our lives, *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

LECTURE XXXVII.

A DISCOURSE BETWEEN JESUS AND HIS
BRETHREN.

JOHN vii. 1—8.

1. *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.*

2. *Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.*¹

3. *His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.*

4. *For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.*

5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

We find *the brethren of Jesus* afterwards, (Acts i. 14,) together with Mary, and the faithful women who accompanied him, so occupied, and so described, as shows them to have been then believers

¹ ἡ σκηνοπηγία. Lev. xxiii. 33—43. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

in him.² But at present their language is only that of suspicion and jealousy. "For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country."³ As a general remark, we can easily understand this. Prophets are men, and have the weaknesses of men. Their errors are most clearly seen by those amongst whom they live : and the force of the message is often lessened by the imperfections of the messenger. This is not reasonable ; but it belongs to human nature. Jesus, however, had not the weakness of a man. But a similar feeling made his brethren the last to believe in one who had been brought up and lived among themselves.

Nor can we be surprised at their saying as they did : *If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.* They were ignorant of the settled plan of his ministry, and the determinate counsel which governed it all.

6. *Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come : but your time is always ready.*

7. *The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*

8. *Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast ; for my time is not yet full come.*

The great cause of enmity against Jesus is here declared. He brought the men of that time to a test which they could not stand : he showed to *the world*, to the great mass of the people, that their prin-

² " These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and with his brethren.*"

³ See chap. iv. 44.

ciples and their practice laid them under condemnation : and they, instead of reforming themselves, assailed their teacher. *The world can hate you; has no reason of enmity against ye for ye are its friends ; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.* If he favoured the pride and haughtiness of the chief priests or Pharisees, had he allowed the spirit of the law to remain neglected, and its precepts to be glossed over till they became of no avail, he might have taught in safety ; he might have been followed and applauded. But one who pronounced his blessing upon the meek and humble, could not be approved by the proud and self-righteous ; one who required purity, must be disliked by the sensual ; one who condemned hypocrisy, must be dreaded by the hypocrite. It was impossible that those who had all their affections set on things below, should delight in him who taught them to lay up treasure in heaven.

This both explains and confirms the truth which our Lord declared in a former conversation. “ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Unless the Spirit direct the heart towards things above ; unless that which naturally loves and desires present things, be converted towards heaven ; unless that which is opposed to a pure and holy law be drawn towards God and his will ; the gospel of Christ will be hated and avoided. That which is after the flesh will detest that which is after the Spirit. The preacher of “ righteousness, and temperance, and

judgment to come," will have the same treatment as Micaiah; of whom Ahab confessed, "I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Let all ask themselves, whether they have never experienced any thing of the like kind; whether they have never found their hearts rising against a doctrine or a precept which struck close home to themselves, not because the doctrine or the precept were otherwise than scriptural, but because it opposed their habits and inclinations.

The case is altered at once as soon as the heart is awakened to that great truth: "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Then it desires, not what is agreeable, but what is true; not what flatters, but what profits; what can be rested on for eternity. St. Paul asks the Galatians, "Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"⁴ If they were steadily looking to maintain peace with God, and to secure eternal life, he would have appeared their greatest friend, when he endeavoured to turn them away from error, that "the labour" which he had bestowed upon them "might not be in vain." Let a man be once in earnest, and anxious to secure his life, rather than to be spared a present pain or privation; and then he will be the favourite physician, who is the truest; not he who gives the softest answer, but he who prescribes the surest rules. Then too, when the heart is under the influence of the Spirit, meekness and gentle-

⁴ Gal. iv. 16.

ness will prevail: a man will have too strong a sense of his infirmity and corruption, to be surprised at reproof, or offended by censure.

Whom then does our Lord intend and describe, when he says to his brethren, *The world cannot hate you?* He means the same world of which he speaks afterwards as being distinguished and separated from his disciples, saying, that they “are not of it, or the world would love its own:” and that it cannot receive the Holy Spirit, because “it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” He means “the children of this generation;” those who “have their portion in this world;” who have not been “renewed in the spirit of their minds,” so as to “seek first the kingdom of God.” A marked distinction is made in scripture between these and the faithful followers of Christ: but the proportion which each class bears to the other, will vary in different times and situations. In all times and in all places it will be true of them, that they will be adversaries of the gospel, more or less openly, and in a greater or less degree: and for the same reason, that it *testifies concerning them that their deeds are evil.*

The duty, then, of every faithful teacher and every faithful disciple of the Gospel, is, not to seek “the friendship of the world:” remembering how it is written, “whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God:”⁵—but to labour, “in season and out of season,” to make the world their friends: to bring over to the ser-

⁵ James iv. 4.

vice of God those who are now engaged in the service of Mammon. The apostle has left the rule : “ The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” ⁶

LECTURE XXXVIII.

JESUS, GOING UP TO JERUSALEM, REASONS WITH THE JEWS.

JOHN vii. 9—18.

9. *When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.*

10. *But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

11. *Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ?*

12. *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man : others said, Nay ; but he deceiveth the people.*

13. *Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

The reports concerning Jesus had by this time become generally spread. So that, on a public occasion like that of the feast now kept, there was an expectation about him. *Where is he?* The opinions, too, which prevailed, were just as might be supposed, according to the candour or the jealousy, the good or the bad disposition of those who spoke of him. Some called him a deceiver; while others justly argued of the tree from its fruits, and could not believe that a deceiver should work deeds of mercy, or utter words of wisdom. But no man dared openly to avow himself on his side, or speak in his favour. The powers which ruled at Jerusalem were against him. Satan was yet upon his throne, and would not readily give way.

14. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*¹

15. *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?*

16. *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

18. *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*

We have here an example of the manner in which our Lord disclosed his divine mission. *He went up into the temple, and taught.* He taught “as one having authority:” and the people were “as-

¹ He had before said, *I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.*

tonished at his doctrine.” Whence is this wisdom? they asked: it proceeds from no ordinary source: it has been learned from no human teachers. *Jesus answered and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* It is not that which I have derived from man, or which belongs to this world: it is not, like the doctrines of human philosophy, wrought out by the natural understanding; in that sense the doctrine which I teach *is not mine*: it conveys the will of Him that sent me: it is a gracious message that bringeth salvation, and offers eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ.

Should any complain, that this were hard to believe? There should be proof of its truth, satisfactory and sufficient to every honest, meek, and simple heart. *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine* that it comes from God. When the seed falls on “good ground,” on the “honest and good heart,” that honest and good heart shall be led on till it sees and understands the wisdom of God in the revelation of his Son.

This is a great promise; and assists in explaining what was declared in the preceding chapter: “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” We are here informed who those are, to whom it is given of the Father to come unto Christ Jesus for salvation: they who are minded to do the will of God.² Sometimes, indeed, in the history of those who have been brought to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, the prophet’s words have

² Εἰ τις θελεῖ ποιεῖν.

been fulfilled: "I am sought of those that asked not for me; I am found of those that sought me not."³ The goodness of God has no limits that we can discover. But though "he giveth not account of any of his matters," and "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy,"⁴ we have here a sure promise that no man shall ever be passed over by that mercy who is willing to do his will. He may be feeble, but he shall become strong; he may be weak and wavering, but his faith shall be more and more confirmed; he may be simple and ignorant, but he shall be made "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." They who, like the Bereans, "search the scriptures daily, whether these things are so," shall, like the same Bereans, see reason to believe.⁵

We may trace an example of this, in the well-known case of Cornelius. (Acts x.) God saw fit to disclose to the apostle Peter, that he had "granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life:" and explained to him, what his Jewish prejudices made him so slow to believe, that the partition wall was now thrown down which had hitherto separated the Israelite from the Gentile. So he made it evident to Peter that he had revealed himself in a vision to a man who was of a heathen nation, an officer in the Roman army, then stationed in Judea. But the person chosen for this purpose, the man to whom this vision was

³ Is. lxxv. i.

⁴ Job xxxiii. 13. Rom. ix. 15.

⁵ Acts xvii. 11, 12.

granted, was one whom divine grace had already disposed to profit by the privileges which he enjoyed, when placed in the country of Judea, among a people who knew and worshipped the Creator. We read, (ver. 2—5,) that Cornelius “was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do; (xi. 14;) he shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

Here that was done by a special vision, which is commonly brought to pass through the secret agency of the Spirit. Cornelius was one whose heart was set upon doing the will of God: and he experienced the truth of the prophetic promise, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”⁶ He was especially selected to know, and to make manifest to others, “the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations;” that “now in Christ Jesus they who sometime were far off, were made nigh by the blood of Christ.”⁷ He was taught *to know*

⁶ Hosea vi. 3.

⁷ Eph. ii. 13.

of the doctrine of Christ, that it was of God, and that “he is the Saviour of all that believe.”

Thus it is ordained, that “to him who hath, shall be given,” that “every one that seeketh, findeth,” and that “to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” We do not pretend to search out the ways of God, or to limit the exercise of his grace: but “the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever:” namely, that “his mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations.”

LECTURE XXXIX.

JESUS CONTINUES HIS DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS, AND SHOWS THAT THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

JOHN vii. 19—30.

19. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

The Jews were attached to Moses, and made their boast in his law. And yet how little did

they observe it! How was its spirit violated? Nay, even the letter of it: for they were already taking counsel together to put him to death. This He knew, to whom all things were known; though it appeared strange to those with whom he was discoursing.

20. *The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil : who goeth about to kill thee ?*

21. *Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

22. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision ; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ;) ¹ and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.*

23. *If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken ; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day ?*

24. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

The Jews still remembered against Jesus the miracle which he had performed, probably a year and a half before, at Bethsaida; when he healed the paralytic man on the sabbath day. He had defended himself at other times by reference to their own practice, of tending their cattle on the sabbath. He here defends himself by the law of Moses in which they trusted. To keep that law, which required that circumcision should take place on the eighth day from the birth, they were in the habit of infringing upon the repose of the sabbath.

¹ Before it was made part of the law of Moses, it was ordained to Abraham as a seal of the covenant.

And should not he be allowed in a far less degree to infringe upon that repose, in order to restore health to the diseased body? But prejudice listens to no reason. Therefore he warns them not to judge hastily, but to *judge righteous judgment*.

25. *Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?*

26. *But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?*

27. *Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.*²

28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.*

29. *But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me.*

30. *Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*

The cavil of some of the Jews here, pretending that they knew of Jesus *whence he was*, furnishes opportunity for declaring a solemn truth, which might strike conviction to their hearts. *He that sent me is true, whom ye know not.* And yet God was acknowledged by them as the Creator; as the deliverer of their nation; as the author of their law; his word was read in their synagogues;

² This seems to have prevailed as a traditional notion among the Jews, derived, probably, from one of the prophecies: as, "Who shall declare his generation?" or, "Whose goings forth have been of old."

and sacrifice was daily offered to him in the temple. Yet they *knew him not*.

To know God, therefore, is something more than to confess the Scriptures to be his word, or to pay him ceremonial worship. Nay, it is something more than to be acquainted with his attributes, and to acknowledge his power, his justice, his mercy, his wisdom. It is so to bring these attributes of God before the mind, as to act upon them; to let them operate upon our affections, and influence our ways and doings. To know God in a scriptural sense, is to have that acquaintance with him which makes him the object of our reverence, and love, and obedience. It was knowledge of God in the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they made all their undertakings, all their journeys, all their enterprises, begin with God; invoking his aid, and depending upon his blessing. It was knowledge of God in Joseph, when the thoughts of what he owed to God repressed the emotions of sin, and restrained him from entering into temptation. It was knowledge of God in Eli, when he acquiesced in the divine will, though exercised against himself, and submitted to the hand of the Lord. The Psalms are full of the knowledge of God. There we find David, sometimes declaring his majesty and the excellence of his power; sometimes magnifying his goodness and mercy; sometimes bending before him in contrition, sometimes breaking forth in strains of joy and thanksgiving, and always depending upon him for increase of

grace, and strength, and spiritual good. It was knowledge of God to say, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"³ It was knowledge of God to say, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."⁴

Such-like acquaintance with God and his will does not appear in the discourses of the Jews recorded here. They had lost the true understanding of his nature. What ignorance of God, to choose a place of concourse for a display of prayer; to wear the outward appearance of fasting by a sad countenance; to give alms to be seen of men! What ignorance of God to complain that a man was made whole on the sabbath day; to be jealous when a sinner was instructed in the ways of righteousness! So that although they made their boast of God, as the God of their father Abraham; though they professed his worship, and "swore by his name;" it might be truly said, *they knew him not*. In any sense of filial love or duty, they knew him not. Their knowledge of him had no influence upon their hearts or lives.

The Lord proceeds to say, *But I know him; for I am from him, and he hath sent me*. And thus

³ Psalm viii. 3, 4.

⁴ Psalm xix. 7, 8.

he has instructed and enabled us to know God, in a still more endearing character than that in which he was revealed to the Jews. To them he was revealed as the author of their law, the preserver of their nation. To us he is revealed as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent to bless us, by bringing us to himself. This teaches us to know him with that acquaintance which goes nearest to the heart, as having displayed towards us the highest exercise of love. But it is acquaintance which only his Spirit can infuse. He must “shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”⁵ It is a knowledge which must be “spiritually discerned.” May it be granted us more and more fully, till the words of the prophet are accomplished, saying, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people;—for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”⁶

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

⁶ Jer xxxi. 33.

LECTURE XL.

JESUS CONTINUES TO DISCOURSE WITH THE
JEWS AT JERUSALEM.

JOHN vii. 30—39.

30. *Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*

31. *And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?*

32. *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.*

33. *Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.*

34. *Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

35. *Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? ¹*

36. *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?*

So little were they prepared to carry their views

¹ Since the Jews and the inhabitants of Judea will not receive him as the Messiah, will he go among the Gentiles for followers?

beyond the present world, or to understand that now was “the accepted time, now the day of salvation.” The foolish virgins, in the parable, found that they might ask too late, and therefore ask in vain, “Lord, open to us.” Now at this present time, and here in this present world, is the offer made.—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Now is the promise given, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” But now also must the offer be accepted, and the promise claimed. Now we must strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many hereafter, like the Jews who are here warned, “shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;” and find too late, that where Christ and his disciples are, *they cannot come*.

37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

38. *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*²

39. *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

This is one of the many occasions when the Lord took opportunity from the circumstances around him to give force and illustration to the truths

² Not in any particular passage, but in many prophetic passages; as Prov. i. 23; Is. xlv. 3; Zech. xii. 10; Joel ii. 28.

³ Not given to the apostles in the manner which was intended, and fulfilled at the day of Pentecost. Compare xiv. 26, and xvi. 7.

which he declared. It had become customary at the feast of tabernacles to draw water from the fountain of Siloam, and with much pomp of ceremony, and with music, and hymns of thanksgiving, to pour it upon the altar at the offering of the morning sacrifice.⁴ Our Lord witnessed these proceedings; saw the interest which they excited, and the little effect, probably, which they produced upon the heart: and he was led to say, What is the water of Siloam? *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” which have real value, which are waters of life and health. *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* He that believeth on me, drinketh from “the well of salvation:” and shall himself become a fountain, from which streams of refreshing truth shall flow: shall himself diffuse that fertility around, which rivers of living water give wherever they extend. As the scripture hath said, “He shall be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”⁵ As the scripture hath said, “I will pour out my Spirit upon him, I will make known my words unto him.”⁶ “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”⁷

We are not in this case left to doubt concerning

⁴ The origin and purport of this custom has not been preserved; and it had no authority from the law.

⁵ Is. lviii. 11.

⁶ Prov. i. 23.

⁷ Is. xlv. 3.

the interpretation. *This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe in him should receive.*

Such was the promise of those more abundant gifts of the Spirit, which were offered under the gospel dispensation. And if we look from the promise to its fulfilment, we shall see the justness of the comparison.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. The apostles had been brought to feel that salutary thirst. It had led them to Christ Jesus, and retained them in his faith. They had drunk of his words; they had received his doctrine; they were in due time filled with his Spirit: and when they went forth to obey his command and execute their commission, truths flowed from them which were as a living spring of water to mankind, as “floods upon a dry ground.” Before his Holy Spirit was shed upon them, they were themselves as “a dry ground where no water is:” parched and barren in their own hearts, and affording little benefit to others. But when “they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spake the word of God with boldness:”⁸ The waters of salvation flowed freely from their mouths: and “daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”⁹ And those again, who had learnt from them, when they were scattered abroad, and permitted to remain no longer at Jerusalem, “went everywhere preaching the word.”¹ And that word which they preached, had the effect which water has upon the

⁸ Acts iv. 31.⁹ Acts v. 42.¹ Acts viii. 4.

sinking frame or upon the barren ground. It comforted the drooping heart, and “revived the spirit of the contrite ones.” It made “the wilderness blossom as a rose,” and “be like a watered garden.” The heathen, hitherto barren and unprofitable, became abundant in the fruits of righteousness. Instead of the works of the flesh, the fruits of the Spirit appeared: “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”²

And such will always be the effect of the Spirit which they who believe in Jesus shall receive. It shall be in themselves a well of water, “springing up into everlasting life.” And it shall not be confined within themselves, but run over and communicate its blessings. As the influence of evil is unhappily diffusive, so, no less, is the influence of good: and the running stream does not more surely indicate its progress by the fertility which adorns its banks, than the zealous Christian sheds around him the effects of that Spirit by which his heart is filled, and his practice animated. He illustrates the Lord’s assurance. *Rivers of living water* flow to others, out of the abundance of his own heart, out of the fulness which the Lord gives: and which shows, that not to the apostles only, but to the men of every age, He is a fountain of life, from which refreshment, and strength, and health, and salvation, are continually supplied to every one that believeth.

² Gal. v. 22.

LECTURE XLI.

THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS OF THE PEOPLE CONCERNING JESUS. THE PHARISEES ARE DISAPPOINTED IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO TAKE HIM.

JOHN vii. 40—53.

40. *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

41. *Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?*

42. *Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

43. *So there was a division among the people because of him.*

44. *And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

No prophecy seems to have been more generally in the minds of the people than that of Micah,¹ declaring that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. When “the wise men” came as strangers to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” the answer was immediately returned, Christ should be born “in Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it was written by the prophet.”²

¹ Chap. v. 2.

² Matt. ii. 2—5.

Jesus, however, was brought up not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. This was enough to satisfy his thoughtless enemies: *Shall Christ come out of Galilee?* Had they sought further, and inquired, we know they would have found the prophecy most literally fulfilled: and fulfilled by a series of means which showed that the providence of Him by whom the prophet spake was immediately exercised. Jesus did come *of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem.*

It has pleased God to send a light into the world. A veil is sometimes drawn before it; not that the light may be hidden from any, but that occasion may be given to see whether there is the will to draw that veil aside, and discover truth beyond. But the truth, they who “are not of the truth” do not desire to find: others search for it, and are satisfied.

45. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?*

46. *The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

47. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?*

48. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

49. *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*

The officers who had been sent to apprehend Jesus, here give a striking testimony to his character and dignity. They were not, we may suppose, prejudiced in his favour, or inclined to ad-

mire him. Yet they return abashed and confounded, and acknowledge, *Never man spake like this man*. Like the conviction of the Centurion who superintended the crucifixion: "Truly this was the Son of God."

There are not wanting in our own country many who allow the same. *Never man spake like this man*. Without controversy, they will confess, there are no such benevolent precepts, no such wise laws, as those of the gospel. It would be a happier world, if all conformed to them. But, like the officers, they approve and admire, and no more. They do not take the author of this wisdom and goodness for their Lord and their God. And yet it might be justly said, If I have spoken evil, show where the evil is; but if well, why do ye not obey me?

Here, indeed, a reason is alleged; *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?* It was to be taken for granted, that the rulers and the Pharisees were the best judges whether he was to be believed or not.

And in human life this is a constant source of error. People set up others as standards for themselves, and make them their guides. Were the rulers or the Pharisees really better able to decide whether Jesus was the Christ, than the plain men who were astonished at his doctrine? They could not judge better, whether his works proved that "God was with him." They could not judge better whether *he spake as never man spake*. The real question was, Were they witnesses equally disin-

terested? Had they no reason for denying him? Would their own authority have been lessened, if he had been received? Would their own ways of living be condemned, if he were followed? Therefore, the people whom they despised, as *knowing not the law*, and who in many cases received him gladly, were more to be trusted than the rulers or the Pharisees. The things which were hidden from “the wise and prudent,” were “revealed unto babes,” who had less to hinder them from receiving the kingdom of God as little children. Throughout the whole dispensation of the gospel we have constant occasion to see, that “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.”³ To “the wise, to the scribe, to the disputer of this world,” God does not look. But “to this man will I look, saith the Lord; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.”⁴

50. *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)*

51. *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*

52. *They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

53. *And every man went unto his own house.*

In the treatment which Nicodemus received from his brethren the Pharisees, we have a living example of the conduct arising from a worldly party

³ 1 Cor. i. 27.

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 2.

spirit. He ventures to require that Jesus should be dealt with like any other suspected person, according to law and reason. *Does our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*⁵ But the very thought exasperates them. *Art thou also of Galilee?* Dost thou take part with the person whom we are determined to condemn?

Therefore we are warned to “love not the world:” not to make its opinion our rule, or its favour our object. A man’s party, the company to which he belongs, and with which he associates, is a portion of “the world:” and often that portion by which he is most endangered. They are the first whom he must abandon, if he perceives that their course is wrong: and therefore they are the first to oppose him with those taunts and sneers which are so difficult to bear. Many are they who “receive the word with joy: but anon, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by they are offended.”

It is only by the habitual prevalence of FAITH that this danger can be overcome. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It discovers the real worthlessness of that favour which is “not of the Father, but of the world.” The time is at hand, when the good will or the ill will, the applause or the contradiction, the smile or the frown, of a party or a company, will signify no more to us than the

⁵ Deut. i. 17; xvii. 8—11.

wind, whether it be rough or smooth, which blows over our grave. But we know what *will* then profit and avail. He who is owned of Christ; whom the Redeemer is not ashamed of; who is saluted as a “good and faithful servant,”—he will not regret that he braved the term of Galilean or Nazarene:—or any other of those terms, by which, in all ages, those who “are not of the world” have been distinguished by the “children of this generation.” And at that final season it will be remembered in behalf of Nicodemus, that he displeased his party for the sake of Christ, and stood up in defence of him whom others rejected and despised. His conduct in this case comes under the description of that to which a blessed promise is given: “Whosoever receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward.”⁶ “Whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”⁷

⁶ Matt. x. 41.

⁷ Mark ix. 41.

LECTURE XLII.

CASE OF A WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

JOHN viii. 1—11.

1. *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*

2. *And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him ; and he sat down, and taught them.*

3. *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery ; and when they had set her in the midst,*

4. *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

5. *Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ?*

6. *This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.*

7. *So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

8. *And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.*

There are many different reasons by which the scribes and Pharisees might have been instigated in prosecuting this guilty person. They might be affected by a zeal for the divine law and the majesty of God, by a desire that such an offence against it might not go unpunished. Or they might feel that adultery was a crime most injurious

to human society, and deem it right to visit such transgressors severely, that others might be deterred by the example. Such was the commandment of the law (Lev. xx. 10 :) “The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death.”¹

Motives such as these would have been laudable. It is the will of God, (as is seen Levit. xix. 17,) that wickedness be restrained. “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.”

But the Lord knew that these motives had no place in the mind of those who brought the woman before him on this occasion. Their object was “to entangle him in his talk.” “They spoke, *tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.* So he evaded their question, and *said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* As the law provided, (Deut. xvii. 7,) “The hands of the witnesses,” (of those who alleged and proved the crime,) “shall be first upon the convicted criminal to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.”

The answer was an answer of divine wisdom suited to this particular case, and intended to confound the devices of the adversaries. We must not suppose it to imply that crimes are to escape punishment, because those whose duty or office it is to sit in judgment upon them are in their own characters partakers of corruption. Else, (as St. Paul says

¹ The mode of punishment is not there pointed out : but in a similar case, (Deut. xxii. 21,) death by stoning is specified.

on another subject,) “else must we needs go out of the world,” if only he who was without sin might condemn sin in others.

At the same time we may collect here, that there is a way of looking upon crime which shows an unsanctified spirit, and is displeasing to Him who reads the heart. It is the same spirit as the Pharisees betrayed on other occasions, when they upbraided the Lord, because he joined the company of publicans and sinners. A humble mind, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, is grieved at sin. It “rejoiceth not in iniquity,” but “hopeth all things.” It joins in that pathetic sentiment of David, “Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, for the ungodly that forsake thy law.”² It perceives in the corruption of others that corruption of which all partake, and which has alienated man from a pure and holy God. It perceives that if in anything *we* have been made to differ, that difference must be ascribed to the mercy of God which has kept us from temptation, or to his grace which has enabled us to resist it.

Jesus knew that such was not the mind of those who now came forward as the accusers of this woman. So he directed his arrow to their consciences. This woman is indeed a sinner; but what are you that you should exult over her? Whilst you justly condemn her, be mindful of what you yourselves deserve. *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

² Psalm cxix. 136.

9. *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last : and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

10. *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ?*

11. *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more.*

Jesus uniformly refused to take upon himself the office of a judge. When one among a company invited him to interfere with his brother who had defrauded him of his inheritance, he declined to enter into the case ; but dismissed it, saying, “ Who made me a judge or a divider over you ? ”³ And then he proceeded to use the example as a warning against covetousness. And so now in regard to this woman, when none had dared to execute the sentence of the law against her, neither would he. *Neither do I condemn thee :* that is, inflict the punishment which thy crime has incurred. “ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.”⁴ *Go, and sin no more.*

This is a specimen of that mercy, which willeth not “ that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The disgrace which this woman had suffered, the danger in which she had stood, made the present season a favourable time

³ Luke xii. 14.

⁴ John iii. 17.

for warning. The temporal consequences of sin do not in themselves create godly sorrow. But they often lead to godly sorrow; they prepare the soil for receiving the good seed of the word. And therefore this woman is dismissed with a caution not to tempt God further, lest her “last state be worse than her first:” but to “seek the Lord while he may be found:” to return unto him, that he might “abundantly pardon.”

For this, we should observe, is the object of all God’s mercy and forbearance. It is exercised, that men may not perish, but have everlasting life. And that they may have everlasting life, he calls them to repentance and the knowledge of the truth. The great purpose of the gospel, in which “the grace of God which bringeth salvation appeared unto all men,” is, that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” And this, which was the purpose of the grand scheme of man’s redemption, is also the purpose of every individual case of pardon, that they who have received mercy should sin no more, but “let their light shine before men,” to the glory of God and the benefit of the world.

Let these two things be always kept together: the compassion of the Redeemer, and the purpose of that compassion. No compassion for sin has ever been like his, because no one like him ever understood the consequences of sin. But that compassion was shown in the only way of true mercy, by the conversion of the sinner. How emphatically

St. Paul asks, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."⁵ "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

LECTURE XLIII.

JESUS DISCOURSES FURTHER WITH THE JEWS,
AND SHOWS CAUSE WHY THEY OUGHT TO
RECEIVE HIM; AND WHAT MUST BE THE END
OF THEIR REJECTING HIM.

JOHN viii. 12—24.

12. *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

13. *The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true.*

14. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go: but ye cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go.*

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 9. Eph. v. 6.

15. *Ye judge after the flesh ; I judge no man.*

16. *And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.*

17. *It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.*¹

18. *I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.*

19. *Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father ? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father : if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*

20. *These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple ; and no man laid hands on him ; for his hour was not yet come.*

Every reasonable proof was given to the Jews that they were bound to receive Jesus as the Messiah. He asserts himself to be *the light of the world*. *He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*. They make an objection, that the testimony which a man gives of himself, and in his own favour, is not worthy of credit. *Thou bearest record of thyself : thy record is not true*. He replies, that he must needs bear record of himself, because he alone could understand whence he came, and to what end : *I know whence I came, and whither I go : but ye cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go*. For, according to the prophecy, “ Who shall declare his generation ? ”² But then he adds, that his testimony was

¹ Deut. xix. 15. “ One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth : at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

² Is. liii. 8.

not alone, not unsupported : their law allowed that the testimony of two witnesses should be received as true ; and here was the testimony of two ; here was his own testimony, and his Father's testimony. His Father had borne witness to him by a voice from heaven : " This is my beloved Son." His Father was daily repeating the same testimony by the power which Jesus exercised : as he said, " The works which I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me : " " if ye believe not me, believe the works." So that there was no defect of proof, had the mind been open and unprejudiced. No proof will avail, when that is closed against conviction.

21. *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins : whither I go, ye cannot come.*

22. *Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself ? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

23. *And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath ; I am from above ; ye are of this world ; I am not of this world.*

24. *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Here was an awful consideration, little understood. Jesus was looking forward to that time, not now far distant, when he should ascend again to the glory which he had with the Father " before the world was : " to that presence where is " fulness of joy : " to that place where is " pleasure for evermore." And there are those who shall be with him there. He has assured us, that

where he is, there also shall his servant be: and that to him that overcometh, he will grant to sit with him on his throne. But to these who now opposed and rejected him, he openly declares, “Ye shall seek me, but ye shall not find me.” *Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

For two plain reasons. They had refused to seek admission in the way that God proposed. And they were in their characters unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

1. They had rejected the offer made them. Jesus had expressly said, “Whoso believeth on me, I will raise him up at the last day.” But they denied the authority of his words, set aside the testimony of his miracles, treated him with disdain and scorn, instead of respectful inquiry, and now went about to kill him. “Therefore he said, Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” And if they would not come unto him, who is the “Author of eternal life,” where was their hope? They had closed the door against themselves.

To them, and to all, there is but one mode of access to the place where the Lord Jesus is, and will for ever be. He is “the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him.”

2. Such is the Father’s will. But there is a reason for it. They who are to dwell in heaven, must be prepared for heaven. Their evil nature must be renewed and purified. They must “put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the

deceitful lusts; and must put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”³ “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

But all this was utterly distasteful to the scribes and Pharisees, and other opposers of our Lord. That he required holiness, and rebuked ungodliness, was the real objection against him. He demanded the worship “of spirit and of truth:” they assumed a “form of godliness,” pretended to outward sanctity, while within they were “full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”⁴ How could such stand “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple?”⁵ So base was their state of heart, that they took no interest in the conversion of sinners, or the restoration of health to wretched sufferers. How could such dwell with him, whose character it is to be “full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness?” They “shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, and would not suffer them that were entering to go in;”⁶ how should they be admitted into it themselves? They were unjust and violent, and extortionate and cruel: how could they have place with him who loves justice and mercy? They exalted themselves and despised others: where was that meek and contrite spirit which God receives and approves, because it is the only state which befits a frail and guilty man?

Eph. iv. 22.

Rev. vii. 15.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 28.

⁶ Matt. xxiii. 13.

Here then was a second reason, why they must be for ever excluded from that “new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Their dispositions, their characters, were a barrier against them. They were *from beneath*, he was *from above*: *they were of this world*; *he was not of this world*. So that *where he was, they could not come*. A moral gulf lay between them and him. He was now offering to lead them across it, and to place them on the side of heaven: but they rejected the hand which he stretched out; and they would soon find the barrier impassable for ever. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

This was not more seriously important to the Pharisees than it is to ourselves. “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart: in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.”⁷ In those who are to dwell in heaven, there must be a suitableness to the nature of heaven. “For what fellowship hath light with darkness?” what communion has that which is *from beneath*, with that which is *from above*? that which is *of this world*, with that which is *not of this world*? Though it is not the will of God “that any should perish,” we cannot but perceive that the character of the wicked excludes them from heaven: and their character remains what it is, because they

“hate to be reformed,” and “cast the words of God behind them.”

Too late, there may be a time of sorrow and remorse. *Jesus said unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.* The accepted time must be seized, the day of salvation not neglected. Such is the awful warning elsewhere pronounced to these same people. “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye shall begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.”⁸ *Where I am, ye cannot come.*

LECTURE XLIV.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED. FREEDOM IS PROMISED TO THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

JOHN viii. 25—32.

25. *Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.*

26. *I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.*

⁸ Luke xiii. 25.

27. *They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.*

28. *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things.*

29. *And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

Many proofs had Jesus given already, that he was the expected and predicted Deliverer. But the great and irresistible proof was yet to come. *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.* They should lift him up on the cross, intending to degrade him to the lowest infamy: but in so doing, they should really exalt him to the glory which belonged to him. He would burst the bonds of death, and his resurrection should be the seal of his truth. Therefore he looks onward to this, and to the more plentiful influence of the Holy Spirit which should follow. *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.* And a divine power accompanied his words, which many were unable to resist.

30. *As he spake these words, many believed on him.*

31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

32. *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

The truth shall make you free. Such is the effect which Jesus here ascribes to the words which he had delivered, to the doctrines which he came to reveal. They confer FREEDOM.

We are hardly aware, how far the world in general is from being free. The Jews were not aware of the bondage in which they were held, as appears by their answer, which will afterwards come to be considered. They did not perceive that they were *servants of sin*. They did not perceive that Satan was their master, and kept them beneath his yoke. That yoke has many branches. Open and indulged sin is one: the first, from which THE TRUTH, "the truth as it is in Jesus," releases man.

But there is another chain by which men are tied and bound till they have obtained the same deliverance. They are enslaved by the power of THE WORLD.

The cares, the treasures, the honours, the manners of the world, keep multitudes in a state, which may be justly termed a state of bondage. They are harassed by apprehensions that their store should grow less instead of greater: lest themselves, or their children, or their families, should be reduced to a worse condition than they were born to. Or they are in bondage to the opinions of men, and the customs which prevail: deterred from what they feel to be right, or seduced into what they feel to be wrong, or at least restrained from seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, through dread of their friends, their neighbours, their companions. Can such be called free? Nicodemus was not free; when, though convinced that Jesus came from God by the mighty works he did, he dared not openly consult him, but sought him at night, that he might not offend his brethren the

Pharisees. Those “chief rulers” were not free, whom we find mentioned afterwards, (xii. 42,) who, though perceiving that Jesus was the Christ, “did not confess him, because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” Pilate was not free when he would gladly have done justice, and released Jesus, but dared not, lest he should offend the people, and be accused before Cæsar. Freedom, is to do what we see it best to do, what we desire to do. But all these desired to declare themselves on the side of Jesus : which yet they could not do, because they were bound by their love of this world, and enslaved by the fear of man.

Well then might the Lord say to these, and such as these, *The truth shall make you free.* The gospel affords reasons and motives which both deliver a man from the shackles of worldly care, and raise him above the paltry dread of his fellow creatures. It enables him to act according to the dictates of his own conscience and his reason, to choose the real good, and reject the real evil. The martyr was free even at the stake, when he replied to his executioners, You offer me present ease and present life ; but my object is life and happiness eternal : and I can brave a present evil for the sake of an everlasting gain. And so it is in all things. When the truth of the gospel is received into the heart, and made the principle of action, the man becomes *free indeed* : free to seek his highest good, his real interest, his everlasting advantage. For “this is the victory which overcometh the world.

even our faith," our christian faith; which enables a man to say, I fear my God, and have no other fear: I serve my God, and own no other master.

Another yoke, by which men are commonly weighed down, and from which the truth as it is in Jesus delivers them, is the FEAR OF DEATH. St. Paul speaks of this as an important result of the Redeemer's mercy: it delivers them, who "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."¹ It is a bondage, perhaps, which men are unwilling to own, and are hardly conscious of themselves. But it is bondage, to keep out of sight an enemy which must be at last encountered: to know that an event is certain, and yet use every art to exclude it from our thoughts. And how seldom is the fact steadily contemplated, that in a few years, at farthest, we shall be in the grave! Even in illness, how seldom will friends, or nurses, or physicians, acknowledge what yet they believe to be the case; this "sickness is unto death!" They know that the truth would be unwelcome, and therefore they conceal it.

From this bondage, *the truth* relieves the Christian. Not by deceiving him, and closing his eyes to what is really formidable; but by opening his eyes to the way of safety. Not by making him careless and indifferent, which in such a case is want of reason; but by giving him a ground, a solid ground of confidence. *The truth* is, that "there is no

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus:" that he has made a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction for the sins of all that trust in him: that God has covenanted to receive all such, as the "righteous," for whom his "kingdom is prepared." The heart of the Christian testifies within him, that this is his trust: he knows "in whom he has believed:" and his life bears outward witness to what his heart thus testifies within; he walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Therefore death and judgment, and the world to come, are not strange things to one who *knows the truth*: things which he never loves to think of, never admits into his mind from choice: but they make, as it were, a constituent part of this present life: and this world, and that which is to come, are as much united in his daily contemplations, as they are in fact connected by the will of the Almighty. And thus THE TRUTH has delivered him from that fear, to which others are continually in bondage. "For the sting of death is sin." "And the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

This is the freedom which the Lord had in view when he *said to those Jews which believed in him, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* This is part of "the glorious liberty of the sons of God;" and accompanies that deliverance from the dominion of sin, which is the first achievement and effect of christian faith.

And how encouraging the promise, *ye shall know the truth!* Ye shall seek it, and ye shall find it, if ye seek it with your whole heart. Ye shall not

be left to yourselves, but the Spirit shall attend, assist, and direct your inquiry. You may not indeed immediately realise the promise. You may not at once perceive either the extent of your bondage by nature, or the completeness of that deliverance which Christ Jesus has effected for you. But in the end ye shall know it, *if ye continue in his word*: ye shall know that truth, which he who cannot deceive, selects from other truths which are in the world, and other truths which are in scripture, and describes as THE TRUTH, the one important truth: and *that shall make you free*.

LECTURE XLV.

DISCOURSE CONTINUED. FREEDOM FROM THE
YOKE OF SIN CONFERRED UPON THE CHRIS-
TIAN.

JOHN viii. 33—36.

The Jews with whom our Lord was discoursing, and to whom he had given the promise that the truth should make them free, were like all other persons whom Satan holds under his power. They would not acknowledge their state of bondage. They did not feel it. As St. Peter describes them, (2 Eph. ii. 19,) “While they promise liberty to others,

they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

So when they heard the Lord say to those Jews who believed in him, *If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;*

33. *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

34. *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

And it is a just saying. Who can be farther from freedom, who more completely in bondage, than the man who, despising the laws of God, laws mercifully given to protect us from ruin, indulges his evil passions, and yields to the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Satan "leads him captive at his will." This is often felt and acknowledged: there are seasons when the sensual, and the covetous, and the profane, and the intemperate, confess their misery, and would gladly escape from the net in which they are entangled. But it is impossible: "impossible with man:" the ungodly cannot imitate the faith which they reverence; the covetous cannot forego their opportunity, and neglect their treasure: the passionate are overcome with anger: the impure hurried away by temptation: the intemperate must swallow their poison. And is this freedom? or is it the yoke of a most galling bondage? "His servants ye are

whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.”¹

From this state of thralldom Jesus asserts his power and his readiness to deliver them. He proceeds :

35. *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever : but the Son abideth ever.*

36. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

While they were the servants of sin and Satan, they could not *abide in the house* of God ;—in his heavenly kingdom. There are many mansions there ; but none for unrepented sin. *But the Son abideth ever.* For “ of the Son the scripture saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” “ The Father hath delivered all things into his hand, because he is the Son of man.” *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Here, then, is a clear and a most important promise ; that Christ Jesus will deliver those who “ continue in his word, and are his disciples indeed,” from the dominion of sin. It began with his birth. “ His name was called Jesus, for he should save his people from their sins.” And the message was first delivered in the same language. “ God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”²

St. Paul has shown us how this process is carried on in the heart of the Christian. He first sees the danger of his present state. It is proved to him

¹ Rom. vi. 16.

² Acts iii. 26.

by the cross of Christ, which stands before his eyes, as an evidence of the end to which sin leads. "For the wages of sin is death:" "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, reserved for every soul of man that doeth evil." This awakens a desire to escape from that dominion by which he is enthralled. Whoever is in bondage, must first feel an earnest desire to escape, before he bestirs himself to seek the means. And such is the account of the apostle. (Rom. vii. 23.) "I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Here is a just description of captivity. "Who shall deliver me?" Who shall deliver me from my unhallowed passions, my rebellious thoughts? who shall restrain the proud imaginations of my heart? who shall release me from covetousness, envy, malice: from the besetting sin—whatever it may be—of my nature and my habits? These enslave me: have possession of me: and from their dominion I can no more release myself, than I can create myself anew. And then follows the delight of one who sees the prospect open before him, whose preserver is at hand. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He shall deliver me. He can do what man cannot do, give "a new heart and a right spirit." He offers such assurances of pardon, such persuasive motives, such present peace, such future hopes and promises, that

the bonds which enchained my sinful heart are broken, and I am no longer the slave of Satan. He fills my heart with the truth, and *the truth shall make me free.*

This then is the deliverance enjoyed by the disciple of Christ Jesus. "The spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death." Sin is an enemy, but a conquered enemy. It may disturb, and rebel, and harass, and injure, but it cannot subdue or destroy. And this is to be *free indeed*: because it is the being enabled to act according to a man's best interests, both present and eternal. Well may the apostle speak of the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." And well may He be described as a Saviour, who came "to save his people from their sins."

We are now able, by uniting together what has been said in this and the preceding lecture, to form a just estimate of our own state, and inquire how far THE TRUTH, that is, the gospel, has had its proper effect upon ourselves. It has not its proper effect, unless it has freed you from the dominion of sin: so that no habitual transgression of God's will can any more be allowed in your practice, than you would suffer an assassin to continue in your house, or poison to be mixed up with your daily food. It has not its proper effect, unless you are free from the control of "this present world;" and in all things you consider, not what is generally done, not what is apparently expedient to private

interests, or pleasing to the inclination of others, but what agrees with the analogy of Scripture, the example of Christ, the will of God, the prospect of everlasting glory. It has not its proper effect, unless you are delivered from any servile fear of death, and can look forward to an event which you know must come, and which cannot be very distant, as the door of an everlasting kingdom, purchased for you by an Almighty Saviour, whom by faith you have made your own.

Be not satisfied with anything short of this. Look to the faith which you profess, as able to carry you beyond this world, to exalt you above it. For “he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God,” “overcometh the world.”³ *Continue in his word*, for so shall ye be *his disciples indeed*: and learn by happy experience, that his “service is perfect freedom.”

³ See 1 John v. 4, 5.

LECTURE XLVI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED. THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF SATAN DISTINGUISHED.

JOHN viii. 37—47.

37. *I know that ye are Abraham's seed ; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.*

38. *I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.*

39. *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

40. *But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham.*

41. *Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication : we have one Father, even God.*¹

42. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

43. *Why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word.*

Most persons, if not utterly insensible to religion, have some reason satisfactory to themselves why

¹ We are the genuine descendants of Abraham, not by Ishmael or Esau, but by Jacob and the patriarchs.

they should be at ease with regard to God. The Jewish people at this time had such a reason. It satisfied them that they were the posterity of Abraham, whom God had especially blessed and chosen : they were the race which he had “ avouched to be his peculiar people, a holy people unto the Lord.” There was among themselves what might keep up a vain confidence. They were consecrated to God by the rite of circumcision : they differed from the other nations of the world, which worshipped idols, and could give no reasonable account of the creation. And to this they trusted. John the Baptist had alluded to their false confidence, saying, (Luke iii. 8,) “ Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.” Think not thus to shelter yourselves from the wrath of the God of Abraham. And St. Paul assails the same delusion: (Rom. ii. 17 :) “ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God ? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Our Lord here uses the same language. *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* He is not a son of Abraham, who is

merely one of the nation descended from him ; but he who has the faith and the piety and the virtues of Abraham. “ Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness :” ye refuse the testimony which God has given of his Son. Abraham was just and honourable :—ye neglect the “ weighty matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” Abraham honoured Melchizedec, the priest of God :—ye “ kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you.” *This did not Abraham.* He pitied those against whom God had declared his anger, and interceded for the guilty inhabitants of Sodom :—ye “ shut up the kingdom of heaven against men,” discourage the penitent, and scorn the meek and humble. *This did not Abraham.* And if ye were *Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* There is another parent, to whom your character proves you to belong : even he who is the parent of all sin. “ In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil ; whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.”

44. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

45. *And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

46. *Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ?*

47. *He that is of God heareth God’s words : ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

An awful consideration is involved in these words. There are those who are of God, and those who are not of God: "children of light," and "children of darkness:" "children of the kingdom," and "children of the wicked one." These "grow up together until the harvest;" and then each is gathered into his own place: the children of the wicked one are cast into outer darkness, "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

Of which family do we form a part? This is the truly important question. And two proofs are given in this discourse, by which the truth may be ascertained. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded and came forth from God.* This is the first sign. To see Jesus Christ as the object of reverence and affection, is the first proof of a child of God. The apostles make it so. Whosoever loveth the Father, loveth also the Son.² "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha."³ To the children of this world, he is the object of scorn or enmity. Of scorn, because he bids them renounce things temporal for things eternal: and of enmity, because he reproves them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." But "to them that believe he is precious," because he gives them a hope on which they can depend, a foundation on which they may stand secure. His person is precious; for he was wounded for their

² 1 John v. 1.³ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. His promises are precious ; for he has declared himself a refuge to all the weary and heavy laden : and has engaged that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Let men be once taught of God to see their own weakness, sinfulness, nothingness, and Jesus receives all the love which is due to a deliverer, a protector, a friend, a brother.

The second sign of belonging to God's family is, that we receive his words. *He that is of God, heareth God's words.* The son does not reject the absent father's message ; he studies it, prizes it, desires to fulfil it. "The words of God are verity and judgment ; all his commandments are true." But those do not hearken to them, who are not of God. He requires sincerity, purity, integrity, charity, temperance. He declares that without these qualities no one can enter into his kingdom. This must be distasteful to "the children of disobedience:" they are *of their father the devil, and the lusts of that father they will do.* But they that *are of God* hear these words with reverence, and their hearts answer to them. They respond to them with their reason and conscience ; they "delight in the law of God after the inner man:" and if flesh and blood, if the natural and corrupt elements rebel against it, this attaches them still more closely to him on whose grace they depend, and who "is able to save unto the uttermost."

Inquire then of yourselves, according to these two tests. Do you unite with the Psalmist, when he says, “How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God! More to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” Do you agree with the apostle when he describes the feeling of the Christian towards his Saviour? “Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.” For if ye are “born of God,” ye love him who *proceeded forth and came from God*: if ye are the “children of God,” ye *hear your Father’s words*.

LECTURE XLVII.

DISCOURSE WITH THE JEWS CONTINUED. THEY
ACCUSE HIM OF BLASPHEMY.

JOHN viii. 48—59.

48. *Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan,¹ and hast a devil?*

49. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.*

¹ Here used as a general term of reproach. One who did not agree with themselves on the subject of religion.

50. *And I seek not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and judgeth.*

51. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

We have here, in one short sentence, first, the character of him whom Christ acknowledges as his own:—*If a man keep my saying*:—observes it, cherishes it, lives upon it: as is said of Mary his mother; she “kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” And we are told, further, the privilege which belongs to him;—*he shall never taste of death*: its real bitterness shall be unknown to him. For the real bitterness of death arises from the wrath of God: and he is at “peace with God through Jesus Christ.” He shall indeed see the hour of death, like other men: dust he is, and to dust he must return: but that hour is disarmed of the sting which makes it terrible, and it shall be the commencement of a state where there is “no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.”

Those, however, who were now discoursing with the Lord, had none of that spiritual sense by which these truths are understood. It appears by their reply.

52. *Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.*

53. *Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?*

54. *Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God :*

55. *Yet ye have not known him ; but I know him : and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you : but I know him, and keep his saying.*

56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad.*

The difference was great indeed between the feelings of this generation, and the feelings of their father Abraham, concerning the coming of the Son of man. Abraham rejoiced, exulted, when the promise was made to him, that “as the stars of heaven, so should his seed be.”² Abraham rejoiced when he received the assurance, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”³ Abraham rejoiced when the glad tidings were announced to him ; when it was declared by God himself, that “in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.”⁴ He too, like “many prophets and righteous men,” desired to see the accomplishment of this promise. He too, like they, “inquired and searched diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”⁵ And this he *saw*, by the revelation which God granted him. With what clearness or to what

² Gen. xv. 5.

³ Gen. xvii. 7.

⁴ Gen. xxii. 18.

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 11.

extent he saw it, we cannot distinctly tell ; but he saw that which he was glad to see, that which he rejoiced in, of the mercy of God in the redemption of the world, of the blessing vouchsafed to “ all the nations of the earth.” And if, in his present separate state, his soul was allowed to witness the fulfilment of all the promises ; if he *saw the day*, when “ of his seed according to the flesh ” that son was born to whom the promise was made ; if he heard the angels’ hymn announcing, “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men : ” then we may be sure that his joy would be full, and his heart be glad, for his “ eyes had seen the salvation ” of God.⁶

57. *Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham ?*

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.⁷*

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at him : but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

By the nature of what he asserted, and by the manner in which it was expressed—*Before Abraham was, I am* — they perceived that he made

⁶ Many consider this to be the proper interpretation of the passage : he *has seen* it, and rejoiced. The tenses of the verbs, εἶδε, and ἔχων, do not suit this ; neither does it agree with the reply of the Jews.

⁷ Thus using the very expression by which God had declared himself to Moses, (Ex. iii. 14,) I AM THAT I AM : and so purposely showing that “ he and the Father are one.”

“himself equal with God:”—and they took up stones to cast at him.

Such would have been the regular punishment of his crime, had he spoken blasphemy. Here it was the illegal expression of popular violence and enmity, excited by a claim of Godhead which they would not stop to examine. He justified it, however, by escaping their sight, and so delivering himself from their vengeance. His time was not yet come: it was not yet “given them from above,” to have any “power at all against him.” And they never could have any “power at all against him, except it were given them from above.”³ For “he was God,” who “was in the beginning with God.” Before Abraham was, before anything was, he had been: for he had been from everlasting.

This assurance is inexpressibly valuable to those who believe that he is “indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” It gives a strength and a reality to all their hopes and expectations, that their salvation had been so wrought out: has been the care of Him, who, together with the form and nature and sympathy of man, is possessed of the majesty and attributes of God. “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.” But he who was to fulfil these promises, was already in existence; had existed from eternity: and when he offers eternal life to as many as believe in him, he offers of his own, and imparts that which he has himself possessed from everlasting.

³ John xix. 11.

Such is he, by whom “are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.” Such is that “divine power which hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”⁴ Let our acquaintance with the greatness of the giver, exalt our sense of the value of the gift; and lead us to take the more earnest heed that we “lay hold on eternal life,” and do not “receive the grace of God in vain.”

LECTURE XLVIII.

SIGHT GIVEN TO ONE WHO HAD BEEN BORN BLIND.

JOHN ix. 1—12.

1. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

2. *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

3. *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

⁴ See 2 Pet. i. 3, 4.

4. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work.*

5. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

When the impotent man had received his cure at the pool at Bethesda, he was dismissed with the warning, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Perhaps this was remembered by the disciples: and led them to the question, *Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* Or perhaps they wished to hear him resolve that difficult question, in the words of Job, (iii. 20, 21,) "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not?"

One thing is certain, that all evil began with sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."¹ When we look upon sufferings of mind or body, they should at once suggest the thought to us, that we witness the effects of sin.

But we are here taught not to ascribe particular calamities to particular sins. Though the hand of God ought always to be acknowledged, the purpose of God cannot always be discovered. Here he had a wise and merciful purpose, which men could never have divined: that *the works of God should be made manifest* in this man: that the *light of the world*, He whom God had sent to deliver the

¹ Rom. v. 12.

world from spiritual blindness, might show forth in him the power in which he came.

Unquestionably a similar purpose is answered, by the various conditions and numerous calamities which exist in the world. They give opportunity for manifesting those characters and qualities which God expects to be employed. Active sympathy, self-denying charity, are *works of God*: and are manifested when indigence is assisted, when pain is assuaged, when sorrow is relieved, when the fatherless and widow are visited in their affliction.

It would be happy if all felt and acted upon the sentiment which Jesus utters—*I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day*. Short indeed is the time which is given to any man, to prove his faith; to show what master he serves, and for what world he lives. And bitter has been the remorse of many, who, when the night came upon them, have been haunted by the sad reflection, how much they had done for a world which was now vanishing; how little had been done for God!

6. *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,*

7. *And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

8. *The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?*

9. *Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.*

10. *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?*

11. *He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*

It would be loss of time to inquire why it pleased Jesus to *spit on the ground, and make clay of the spittle, and anoint the eyes of the blind man with the clay*; instead of saying to the man at once, Receive thy sight. We may suppose, however, that the command given to him, *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*, was intended as a trial of his faith. A similar method was employed with Naaman the Syrian; (2 Kings v. 10;) “Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” The reason of this command we know. It tried the faith and temper of the Syrian. At first he was indignant; but being brought by wise remonstrance to a better mind, “he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

This man, like Naaman, might have found much to say, why the water of Siloam could never give sight to a man who had been blind from his birth. But he did not argue; he obeyed. *He went his*

way therefore. And his faith was rewarded: *he came seeing.*

How well does this illustrate both the character and the effect of christian faith! The invitation is universally given: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." We are exhorted, under a sense of the evils of life, of the bondage of sin, of the fear of death, to apply to him whom God sent into the world to be a Prince and a Saviour for the remission of sins. The human heart may find many reasons, like those of Naaman, for refusing. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" So Naaman thought: and it might be asked, How could the nature of God be united to the nature of man? How could God undergo suffering? How could the suffering of one atone for the sin of another? How can the belief of that atonement overcome the evil dispositions of the heart, or renew the spirit of the mind?

It were easy to argue thus; and thus we fear too many do argue, and put from them the word of life, the offer of salvation. But as the man who washed in Jordan was recovered of his leprosy: as this man who went blind to the pool of Siloam, left his blindness there, and *came back seeing*: so will it be found by all who simply credit the commands and promises of Scripture, and act upon

them. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Wash away thy sins in the blood of the cross, and the blessings of God's covenant are thine. The effect will be as clearly seen, as in the case of this miracle. Comfort succeeds, where before was anxiety: peace exists, where before was turbulence: the heart is set on things above, where before this world was predominant. And the cause may be explained; the account as clearly given. He that on earth was called Jesus invited me to trust in him, that I might find rest unto my soul: and I prayed him to grant me peace, and I enjoy it: I prayed him to give me strength against my sins, and I possess it. Such has been the experience of multitudes: and such may be the experience of all.

The man who had received sight, was asked, *Where is he?* We have a certain answer to that question; he is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. "Ask of him, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

LECTURE XLIX.

INQUIRY OF THE PHARISEES INTO THE CASE
OF THE MAN WHO HAD RECEIVED HIS SIGHT.

JOHN ix. 13—34.

13. *They brought to the Pharisees him that beforetime was blind.*

14. *And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

17. *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, he is a prophet.*

Where prejudice and enmity exist, such as the Pharisees indulged against Jesus, it is never at a loss for argument. It perverts the most innocent sentiments, or misrepresents the most laudable actions. It shows exactly the opposite spirit to that charity which St. Paul describes as constituting the christian temper. "Charity hopeth all things." Prejudice aggravates all things. "Cha-

rity thinketh no evil." Prejudice allows no good. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Prejudice is careless as to truth, and rejoiceth when the charge of iniquity can be fastened on its object, whether through the fault of human infirmity, or the report of calumny. Therefore, said some of the Pharisees on this occasion, *This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day.* So they had often endeavoured to turn aside the effect of those miracles which bore witness of him. It is the sabbath day on which he has shown this mercy: therefore he *is not of God.* Their enmity did not allow them to perceive, that the recovering of sight to the blind was one of the clearest marks by which their expected Messiah was to be known. "Their foolish heart was darkened," so that "seeing they saw not, and hearing they did not understand."

Had the objection been sincere, and founded on a just sense of what was due to the day which God had hallowed, there was a plain and simple answer, which might have removed all doubt and scruple. *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* This was so manifest, as at once to convince the man who had received the cure. When he was asked, *What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?* he said, *He is a prophet.* He is one whom God hath commissioned to instruct and comfort his people. The man could not at present know that he was more than a prophet: but this he knew, and this was enough to

satisfy him, that such power, such mercy, could have no other source.

Here then was the condemnation of the Pharisees. If there was real cause to hesitate concerning the divine commission of our Lord, they had just excuse in rejecting him. But there was no such pretext, and their sin remained upon them: a wilful, presumptuous sin: they were “not of the truth,” and therefore he who told them the truth was hateful to them.

And let all beware, how they permit the prejudices of habit or imperfect education, or the notions which are current around them, to prevail against the simple truth of the Gospel: to conceal from their minds the condemning guilt of man, or the atoning mercy of Christ.

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

19. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?*

20. *His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:*

21. *But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

22. *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

23. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.*

24. *Then again called they the man who was blind, and*

said unto him, Give God the praise : we know that this man is a sinner.

25. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not : one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

26. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes ?

27. He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?

28. Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple ; but we are Moses' disciples.

29. We know that God spake unto Moses : as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

30. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

31. Now we know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out.

It was at no small risk, therefore, that any man ventured to declare his belief in Jesus. But this person, though he had laboured under the disadvantages of blindness, had been endued by God with qualities more valuable than that of which he was deprived. The eyes of his understanding were opened, though the eyes of his body had been closed. He knew what the oracles of God de-

clared, that *God heareth not sinners*. David had not spoken in vain:—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."¹ He knew further what all the history of his country proved, that "the eyes of God are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers." Therefore he perceived the evident truth, that *if this man were not of God, he could do nothing*.

But he had justly observed already, it was vain to speak this to men who would not hear. *Wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?* However clear the argument, or evident the fact, they would not be his disciples. They cannot reply to his plain reasoning; but they can revile and persecute. *Thou wast altogether born in sins*—thy misfortune proves thee to have been accursed of God from thy birth—and *dost thou teach us? And they cast him out*.

Those who love darkness rather than light, will use the means which are in their hands to keep in darkness all by whom they are surrounded. So the Pharisees cast out, put out of the synagogue, the man whose reasoning they could not resist or gainsay. Had he not been taught of God, and therefore wiser than his teachers; had there not been the motions of a Spirit within him, which enabled him to love the praise of God more than the praise of man, he would not have dared to oppose their sentiments. This gave him a boldness which nothing else could give, a liberty which would not be restrained. He who, when

¹ Ps. lxvi. 18.

the morning rose, was a beggar asking alms, is now raised above the governors of the land and the leaders of the people. He acts according to his reason and his conscience, which neither Herod nor Pilate dared to do : he declares the honest conviction of his soul that *if this man were not of God, he could do nothing*. He is one of the many examples of the foolish things of the world which “ God hath chosen to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world which God hath chosen to confound the things which are mighty.”² What “ he hath hid from the wise and prudent, he hath revealed unto babes.”

LECTURE L.

THE HAUGHTY AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT OF THE PHARISEES CONDEMNED.

JOHN ix. 35—41.

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?*

36. *He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?*

² 1 Cor. i. 27 ; Matt. xi. 25.

37. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

38. *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

Thus the man who had lost the favour of his countrymen, received an ample recompense. Jesus did not neglect or overlook him; did not leave him comfortless. He searched him out and found him, and revealed himself as the Son of God, of whose power the man had already seen such undoubted evidence.

There were no reasons of prejudice or interest to cloud this poor man's mind: no worldly mists to interrupt the clearness of his view. At once he exclaimed, *Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

This gives an instance of the manner in which our blessed Lord observes the circumstances of his people. This man had risked everything, and lost everything, by daring to "confess that he was Christ." But he should lose nothing in the end; nay, he should have "manifold more in this present time;" manifold more in the favour of the Son of God, than he could have gained by the praise of men.

Many sincere Christians have complained that they walk in darkness, and have no light; that to them the comforts seem to be denied which others have enjoyed. Is it not that, in the possession of ease and outward prosperity, they have less needed the special refreshments of the Spirit? Perhaps, indeed, they have rather needed to be humbled and

kept low. But we here learn how surely he whom they believe, he whom they worship, keeps his eye upon them; and should the season of their need arrive, will *find* them, and manifest himself unto them. He giveth not “as the world giveth,” but when the world giveth not. “When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up.”

Very different, however, is the effect of the same truth on different minds. Therefore *Jesus said*—observing the case of this humble worshipper, and of the obdurate Pharisees—

39. *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*

40. *And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?*

41. *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*

The effects of all spiritual instruction are similar. It brings character to light: it shows what is in the heart. And, as the apostle says, “The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing.”¹

In this case, the warnings of Jesus showed the obstinacy of those who heard them; his expostula-

¹ Heb. vi. 7.

tions proved their contempt of God's word; and his instructions, their self-conceit and pride. *Are we blind also?* We who are "instructed out of the law, and make our boast of God,"² can we have anything to learn?

Upon which they are told the awful truth, that the unavoidable ignorance of many meets with more favour in the sight of God, than the pride of others who in their conceit are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." *Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*

Consider then, the spirit, the state of mind, which is here condemned. It is seen in action, when the Pharisee says thus within himself, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." It is seen in the language of a previous discourse, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed." It is seen in what had been just said to the man whose eyes had been opened, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" These men are confident, that they are "guides to the blind, instructors of the foolish;" and know not that they are "blind guides," who think themselves to be something, when in fact they "seeing see not, and hearing they do not understand."

There is a self-satisfaction and complacency which is implied in the sentiment, *we see*—which is directly opposed to the spirit that accompanies salvation. That spirit is never satisfied: never thinks that enough is known, or enough done. The

² Rom. ii. 17, 18.

children of this world are active as well as “wise in their generation:” they are always seeking, “Who will shew us any good?” Who will discover for us a new mode of pleasure, or open a new path of gain? And so the children of God will be ever inquiring, how they can discover more of his character or of his will. They do not indeed pay implicit credence to every teacher. Jesus did not demand this. He expressly says, “If I had not done amongst them deeds such as never man did, they had not had sin.” It is one thing to believe every teacher; and another to refuse to “try the spirits, whether they be of God.” The Jews refused to try the spirit in which Jesus came. And multitudes, from a like disposition of mind, set themselves against an argument or an expostulation, because it may possibly prove them to be wrong. It was the true prophet whom Ahab refused to hear;³ and there is something of his disposition in many who reject a book, or turn away from an argument, because it “does not prophesy good concerning them.” Whereas the rule is to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” It is no proof that we are wrong, that others think us so: but neither is it any proof of being right, that we believe ourselves right. “With me,” says St. Paul, “it is a very small thing to be judged of man, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself: (I am conscious of no evil against myself:) yet am I

³ See 1 Kings xxii. 8.

not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”⁴

Therefore “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak :”⁵ slow to speak in his own favour, as if truth could only dwell with himself : and slower still to speak in condemnation of others : but let him be swift to hear, for he has much to learn, and it may be much to unlearn. Such is the child-like spirit, with which the kingdom of heaven must be received : the spirit which Eli displayed, when he, the aged priest, the judge of Israel, required the infant Samuel to hide nothing from him of all the things which the Lord had said unto him.⁶ “What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee ? I pray thee, hide it not from me.” Whoever has a due sense (a due sense, indeed, no one has—but whoever has an enlightened sense) of the value of the soul, will feel that when so much is at stake, nothing must be slighted or neglected, which can relate to its welfare. The eyes of many have been opened to danger which they had long despised, even on this side the grave. It is melancholy to reflect, that at the day of judgment, the eyes of many more may be opened, which had been wilfully closed here : the eyes of those who had said, *we see ;—therefore their sin remaineth.*

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

⁵ James i. 19.

⁶ 1 Sam. iii. 17.

LECTURE LI.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE DOOR OF
THE SHEEPFOLD.

JOHN x. 1—10.

1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

2. *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

3. *To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

4. *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice.*

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers.*

The last chapter described the manner in which the Pharisees treated the blind man, when they cast him out of the synagogue because he took the part of Jesus, who had given him sight. Yet the Pharisees were leaders of the people,—their instructors : they professed to guide and feed the sheep : whom they would they admitted, and whom they would they excluded from the fold. This may have led to the parable which we are

now to consider. The Lord speaks of the people as of sheep that are folded. And he speaks of the fold, as having a door of entrance. And he describes himself as that door, through which whoever has a real claim to lead or guide the sheep must enter in. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

John the Baptist, for instance, had entered by the appointed door. He had directed the people to Jesus, as possessed of power which he himself had not, as entitled to honour which he could not claim: as the predicted "Lamb of God, who should take away the sin of the world." The Pharisees, on the contrary, used all their authority to disparage Jesus. They refused his testimony, denied his miracles, contradicted his doctrine, and agreed that if any should confess that he was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Hence he lays down a rule by which the *shepherd of the sheep* may be at all times known. *He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep*: he that, like St. Paul, "desires to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" as the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved." This is *to enter in by the door*. And to such *the porter openeth*. Their way is prepared by the Spirit of God, who disposes many hearts to listen to their teaching: *the sheep hear the voice of such a shepherd, and are led by him: he goeth before them in*

the way that they should choose, and they *follow him* :—they are followers of him, as he is of Christ : they *know his voice*, for it is that to which they are accustomed : but *they know not the voice of strangers*, who use another tone, or speak a different language.

Such is the agreeable contemplation presented to us by the parable. It is an interesting sight to observe a flock of sheep going quietly on their way : not driven by violence, or harassed by noise ; but slowly moving onwards, with their shepherd before them, carrying perhaps a lamb in his bosom, or gently leading those that are with young. From time to time they linger awhile, and graze by the wayside : but still he is leading them forward, and they are making progress towards the spot where he intends them to remain. And this sight, pleasing in itself, becomes still more so when it is compared with the minister of the gospel, to whom is committed the charge of Christ's sheep in this sinful world. *He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.* Are any missing ? any needing his peculiar care ? He answers the prophet's description, (Ezek. xxxiv. 16,) and " seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away, and binds up that which was broken, and strengthens that which was sick." And *when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.* He directs and leads, but does not drive them : he goes before them in whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report : " by

pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God.”¹ And thus he conducts them “through the wilderness like a flock,” proceeding onwards to a safe retreat, to a never-failing pasture, to an undisturbed fold; into which “the chief shepherd” is already entered, and is watching to preserve his sheep, now scattered in this world of trial, and waiting to receive them into a world of safety and of joy. There they shall “neither hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them.”² For through all eternity “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:” and the shepherd and the sheep shall rejoice together.

6. *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.*

7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

8. *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

9. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

10. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

Here our Lord represents himself still more clearly as *the door of the sheep*: the only entrance, by which either the sheep or the shepherds can enter into the heavenly fold. All who were used

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 6.

² Is. xlix. 10.

to claim authority, and exercise it over the people, *were thieves and robbers*: came for their own benefit, not for the sheep's sake:" came *to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*: to counteract, not to serve the great purposes of divine mercy, which desired *that they might have life*. These, if they could, would prevent this: they neither enter in themselves, nor suffer others to enter in. 'To such the true flock will not listen; they have none of the qualities which entitle them to be heard.

But Christ is the door, both to the shepherds and to the sheep. By him both "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." By him *if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture*. He shall have freedom and comfort: freedom of soul, and grace to supply every need. And such is the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and such the abundant blessings which they enjoy, whilst they continue within his fold. Whether they are the shepherds, to whom the charge of the flock is entrusted, or whether they are the flock under their earthly shepherd's care, they *go in and out, and find pasture*: they are in a state of safety, delivered from spiritual want and harm. The Lord, "the great Shepherd of the sheep," has them under his charge: they shall not be destitute. "He maketh them to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth them beside the still waters. He restoreth their soul: he leadeth them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of

their life; and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”³

LECTURE LII.

CHRIST DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN x. 11—18.

11. *I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

12. *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth : and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

13. *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

14. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

15. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

17. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.*

18. *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to*

³ Ps. xxiii. 2, 3, 6.

take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

In his former words, our Lord had described himself as the door of the sheepfold: the door by which the shepherds must find admission to the flock, the entrance by which both shepherds and their flocks must seek access to the Father.

This leads him to another comparison. He is not only the door of the fold, but he is also the guardian of those within the fold: he fulfils the prophetic promise; he “feeds his flock like a shepherd.” Others indeed pretended to be shepherds: there was no want of those who took upon themselves to lead and superintend the people. But they were shepherds, as Isaiah had said, “that could not understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.”¹ They were those of whom God had said, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”² He was *the good shepherd*. And there was a proof of it. He would *give his life for the sheep*. Not as *the hireling, whose own the sheep are not*, and who would neither risk anything for their safety, nor sacrifice anything for their good: who *seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth*. Very different was the case of him who purchased the flock with his own blood: and who could say, *I lay down my life for the sheep: I know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

¹ Is. lvi. 11.

² Ezek. xxxiv. 2.

These two sentences well deserve remark : *I know my sheep ; and am known of mine.*

When we look out into the world in a moral view, it appears a scene of confusion. And it is a comfort to those who have hearkened to the words of God speaking to them in the gospel, that they have this assurance ; “ the Lord knoweth them that are his.” Perhaps they are little known by men, and still less understood : but whether they are approved and admired, or misrepresented and scorned ; whether they are justly valued, or unjustly despised ; they are at least seen and known according to their true character, by him whom they love and serve. Some may overlook them, for the disciple of Christ does not push himself forward ; some may condemn them, for many think that they are following a shadow ; some may think them hypocrites, for much that is undeserved is often laid to their charge ; but however this be, their heavenly Shepherd sees and distinguishes them, and judges them according to what they are, and not according to what they are not. *I know my sheep*, he has said. This proves the aptness of the comparison, which likens him to a shepherd, and his followers to a flock. For a stranger and common observer, looking towards a flock of sheep, would confound one with another, and think it impossible to discern between them ; while their shepherd, from the close attention and diligent care with which he has been long used to mark and study them, can tell them all ; and knows them

by signs which another could neither perceive nor understand.

2. But this is not all that we are told. We are further assured, that as the shepherd knows the sheep, so the sheep their shepherd. I know my sheep, and *am known of mine*. They do not indeed know him by the hearing of the ear, or by the seeing of the eye. He is far above out of their sight, and his disciples, to whom he was at this time speaking, knew him in a way in which we cannot know him now. But this does not hinder our knowing him in a true and proper sense; that is, our trusting him, loving him, and serving him. The case is like that of a father, who may be in a foreign country; but who maintains, and educates, and exhorts, and advises a child that remains at home. The child knows that father, though without seeing him. He knows what he is to the father, and what the father is to him, and what he does for him. In the same manner do the sheep of Christ know their shepherd. They “have not seen, and yet have believed.” As St. Peter says, “Whom, not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”³ He has left his invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.” They have heard this call, as if addressed to themselves: and they have attended to it, and have come to him by faith and prayer, and have desired to escape from a dangerous world, and to place them-

³ 1 Peter i. 8.

selves within his fold. Thus they have joined themselves to his flock, sought shelter under his care, and know in whom they are trusting. When, therefore, Jesus has left this truth written, *I am known of mine*, he means that he is known by those who believe in him, not in a visionary or enthusiastic manner, not by dreams or fancies; but in that sober intelligent way in which a parent is known by his children, or a master by his servant, or a commander by his soldiers. They know him as the child knows that he looks to his parent for support; as a servant knows that he looks to his master for direction; as the soldier looks up to his commander, for encouragement and example. In this way the Christian depends on Christ, in his passage through the world: takes him as his pattern, obeys him as his lord, reverences him as the author of his spiritual being, and loves him as the giver of eternal life.

Let all ask themselves, whether the Lord Jesus is thus known to them? If they belong to the true flock, they must have this acquaintance with their Shepherd.

And great indeed is the comfort springing from these words. The world in which we live has been reduced by sin to a state, which makes it no longer a pasture in which God's people may enjoy themselves, but a wilderness in which they are too likely to go astray. But in this wilderness there is still a fold, and those within it shall dwell safely; and in this fold a flock is gathered together;—of all ages, some young, and some

old; and of all ranks, some high, and many low : and over this flock a shepherd watches, and knows every one, whether young or old, rich or poor,—knows every one that is his own. And he too, in his turn, is known by them : they are conscious that they are not alone; their shepherd careth for them; and under his guidance they “shall never perish;” for he came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly,”

LECTURE LIII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIS FLOCK, AS HEARING HIS VOICE AND FOLLOWING HIM.

JOHN x. 19—30.

19. *There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.*

20. *And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad : why hear ye him ?*

21. *Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?*

Thus is “wisdom justified of her children.” The words which were spoken “as never man spake,” the deeds which no man could do “ex-

cept God were with him,”—were sufficient proofs in what authority Jesus came. Those received them as such, whose hearts were “prepared for the Lord.” Those were convinced by them, whose hearts were not hardened through sin, or occupied with the interests of this present world: for they said, *These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

22. *And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*

23. *And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch.*

24. *Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.*

25. *Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.*

26. *But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

27. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

28. *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

29. *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.*

30. *I and my Father are one.*¹

Here, again, Jesus compares those who believe in him to a flock, “the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” He speaks of them

¹ One essence. The original is in the neuter gender.

as being given him of his Father, to be redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his grace, and reserved for an eternal inheritance: defended by his own power, and his Father's power, from the temptations of the world and the malice of Satan. *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man (any one) pluck them out of my hand.*

Thus close is the connexion between the Redeemer and the redeemed. But the same scripture which declares their privileges, describes also their character by marks which cannot be mistaken. *My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me.*

The first sign, then, by which the Lord knows his flock, is, that they *hear his voice*. They hear his voice, saying unto them, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is the first voice they hear, calling them to renounce a perishing world, and to shun the deceitfulness of sin, and to seek an eternal inheritance. But it is not once only that they hear his summons. Sheep that are well attended, are constantly obedient to their shepherd's voice; and the sheep of Christ are always anxious to hear and receive his word. There they find comfort and instruction: they read it, they pray over it, they meditate upon it, they prize it above all things: saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law :” may be guarded by its warnings, led by its directions, and supported by its promises. Whatever conveys to them the mind and will of their good Shepherd, they humbly and willingly receive.

Thus they hear the Redeemer’s voice : and I should add, they hear no other. The flock of Christ “will not follow a stranger, but flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.” One may come, and beckon them out of the safe pasture, out of the straight-forward road of the Bible. Some may allure them with the pleasures of sin, others may promise them the treasures of this world : or some may pretend that there are other ways of reaching heaven, besides that which Christ has taught ; that there is no need of becoming “a peculiar people,” purified by the Holy Spirit, and “redeemed from all iniquity.” Some there have been, and always will be, to say such things ; but this is the voice of strangers : the true flock will not listen to it, but will answer at once, This is not the voice which I have been accustomed to hear : I know it not, neither will I follow it, for it will lead me to destruction.

Observe now the second mark by which, as we are here told, the Shepherd distinguishes his sheep. —*They follow him.* The Scripture sets before them the path which their Saviour trod : and their endeavour is, to follow his steps. In this country, indeed, the sheep do not commonly follow after the shep-

herd, but go before him. But in many countries the shepherd still leads the way, and the flock follow him into that pasture where he intends them to feed. According to this practice, our Lord says, *my sheep follow me*. And follow him they must, if they would be known as his, here or hereafter.

They must follow him in HOLINESS. His language is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." They must follow him also in LOVE. By this, he says, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another." "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." They must follow him too in SELF-DENIAL. He has expressly said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." They must follow him in MEEKNESS, in HUMILITY. "This mind must be in them, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Thus in a quiet and lowly spirit, in a spirit which pleases not itself, in charity of heart and practice, in a pure and blameless life, must the sheep of Christ tread in their Shepherd's path, as they walk towards their Shepherd's heavenly fold. And those who are walking thus, are the flock of whom Jesus spoke, when he said, *They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*. He says it not of those, although they may be called by his name, who range the world

at pleasure, doing what they list, and going where their evil inclinations lead them : but he says it of those who place themselves under his care, are directed by his guidance, and governed by his rules. These have a protection which nothing can overcome : they have a power around them and within them, which, notwithstanding many conflicts and many trials, will finally prevail. He whose call they have heard, whose voice they have followed, shall *give unto them eternal life*. “ For it is not the will of his Father which is in heaven,” that one of the flock of Christ shall ever perish.

LECTURE LIV.

THE WORKS DONE BY CHRIST PROVED HIM TO
BE ONE WITH HIS FATHER.

JOHN x. 31—42.

In the discourse which we last considered, the Lord had declared the safety of his sheep, by reason of the care which protected them. *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.*

This might be interpreted in two ways. He might mean that they are one in will, one in sentiment, one in interest. For in that sense he speaks of his people even on earth as one with God: when he prays for them, that they all may be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Thus high are those exalted by the word of truth, whose faith has brought them within the fold of Christ.

Our Lord, however, when he declares that he and his Father are one, has a further and a higher sense than this, that they are one in counsel and in purposes. He means also, that they are one in nature and essence; so that each might be termed with equal truth, "the mighty God, the everlasting Father."² He means to explain the meaning by which he was called, the name "Immanuel, God with us."³ He means to interpret the prophetic psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."⁴ He means to interpret the call which was given to "the cities of Judah, Behold your God."⁵ He thus led the way to his apostles, who taught afterwards, that he was "God over all, blessed for ever:" that "God was manifest in the flesh:" that he is "the true God, and eternal life."⁶

¹ John xvii. 11, 21.² Is. ix. 6.³ Is. vii. 14.⁴ Ps. xlv. 6; compare Heb. i. 8.⁵ Is. xl. 9.⁶ Rom. ix. 5; Phil. ii. 6; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 John v. 20.

This important mystery, and this consoling truth, we can only receive as it is revealed to us. Till we can discover the nature of God, we shall not be able to discover the way in which the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.⁷ St. Paul has reckoned it among the things which shall hereafter constitute the blessedness of the “saints in light,” that they shall no longer “know in part, but know even as they are known.”⁸

But is it certain that we do not mistake the sense in which Christ intended to declare that he and his Father are one? That is made certain by the answer of the Jews to whom he spoke, and by the effect which his words produced upon their minds.

31. *Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.*

32. *Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father : for which of those works do ye stone me ?*

33. *The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*

34. *Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods ?*

35. *If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken ;*

36. *Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ?*

⁷ Athanasian Creed.

⁸ 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

Here, as in many places, the Jews are answered by an argument which might silence themselves. Their scripture, (that scripture which came by inspiration of God, and *cannot be broken*, cannot err :) their scripture called the rulers of the people *gods*: for it commands, “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.”⁹ And another passage says, “Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.”¹ If those, then, are called by this lofty term, whom even on earth God has raised to honour, *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?* may not he be well deserving of that title who doeth the works of God, and shows by those works that he is one with the Father? The word *god* is used in Scripture to distinguish rulers and magistrates, as “God’s ministers,” “powers ordained of God.” So that were he even a prophet and no more; were he but another Moses, or another Elijah, whom *God had sanctified and sent into the world*;—he might without blasphemy be styled the Son of God. Let them consider this; let this show them, that he could not justly be accused of blasphemy.

⁹ Exod. xxii. 28.

¹ Ps. lxxxii. “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”

And then let them go on, and consider more. He showed them sufficient proofs, that he was what he claimed to be : works which might make them say, “ When Christ cometh, will he do greater things than these ? works which might lead them to be convinced, “ Truly this is the Son of God.” What more could be alleged, than he did allege ? He gave all the evidence which could be required, he gave the only proof which is possible, when he said,

37. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.*

38. *But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works : that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

In this way, at many former times, God had declared the divine commission of his servants. Thus Moses had shown that he acted in the name of God : thus Elijah, and Elisha his successor, had been sanctioned ; and now God, who “ had in times past spoken unto their fathers by the prophets,” thus proved that he “ spoke unto them by his Son.” But their hearts were hardened, and their eyes closed against truth.

39. *Therefore they sought again to take him : but he escaped out of their hand,*

40. *And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized ; and there he abode.*

41. *And many resorted unto him and said, John did no miracle ; but all things that John spake of this man were true.*

42. *And many believed on him there.*

The belief of some, and the unbelief of others, are alike an example to us now. Both parties saw the same works, both heard the same words. But some believed, and others believed not. Where was the difference? In their minds, in their hearts. How could they believe, who “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God?” How could they believe, who “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?” And how can any believe, to any good effect, while a love of the world, and the things that are in the world, perverts their reason, and blinds their moral sight? It is because men are not really willing to do the will of God, that they do not so acknowledge the truth of his word, as to make it the rule of their thoughts and practice.

Yet, O Lord, “to whom shall we go?” Believing or unbelieving, death will find us, and we shall enter upon an everlasting existence. Open thou our hearts, now while it is time, that we may see the wonders of thy law, and lay hold on eternal life, as thy unspeakable gift, through Jesus Christ.

LECTURE LV.

THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS, BROTHER OF
MARTHA AND MARY.

JOHN xi. 1—6.

1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

2. *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*

3. *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

4. *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

6. *When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

This chapter introduces us to the character and domestic interests of a family which deserves our close attention. It is distinguished by this peculiar honour, that *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*. Surely those must be regarded as truly blessed, who obtained the love of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world! Whatever may be thought of such a distinction now, the time will arrive when no other will be prized. When “this world pass-

eth away, and the lust thereof," blessed are they of whom it may be said, He who is "coming in clouds and great glory," he who is seated "on the throne of his glory," is he who loveth them.

If we are sensible of this, we shall examine into what we know of the character of this family, and consider how far it is open to our imitation.

The blessedness which they were enjoying, as distinguished by the love of Jesus, had its commencement in their faith.

They perceived the character in which he came, and acknowledged the object of his coming. One of the sisters says to him, in a discourse which soon follows, "Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Now there were but few to whom grace to perceive this was given, during the sojourn of Jesus on earth in his state of humiliation. Some said, "He deceiveth the people;" others said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" And the multitude, we may suppose, pursued their usual concerns, and paid little heed to the subject. These, however, saw the truth. And what was still more important, they acted on it. For this too was not the case with all. We are told that "many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."¹ These were not of that party. They confessed him openly, and received him will-

¹ John xii. 42.

ingly. When the purposes of his ministry carried him to their neighbourhood, theirs was the house to which he used to resort with his disciples.² And the opportunity of instruction which they thus enjoyed, was neither lost nor thrown away. Martha, indeed, on one recorded occasion, “was cumbered about much serving;” was too busily occupied in the duties of hospitality to profit by her divine visitor. But “Mary sat at his feet, and heard his word.” And the blessings which she was conscious of, the debt which she owed to Him who had taught her to “choose that good part” which should be hers for ever, this debt she was eager to repay by all the means she had: by zealous fervent love. *It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair.*

Now the Lord Jesus is no respecter of persons. That which attracts his love, is the character. And where there is a character like that of Mary, and Martha her sister, and Lazarus, there also will his love be still bestowed. Ask yourselves, then, What think ye of Jesus? Do you recognise him, as Martha did, to be “the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world?”

Concerning this, however, you have no hesitation. But is this belief any more than an inward conviction; a conviction not manifested by your life, not evidenced by your practice, not tending to make you “a peculiar people, redeemed from all iniquity, and zealous of good works?” Do

² Luke xii. 38; John xii. 1.

you prize the Lord's words, and make sacrifice, as Mary did, to hear and study them? She risked the appearance of neglecting her guests; she encountered the rebuke of a sister who was dear to her, that she might listen to the words of eternal life. Do you act likewise? Are you also ready to spend what is precious to you in doing honour to your Saviour? This Mary did. She "took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair."³ "This ointment might have been sold for much;" but she valued him more than all. And it is useful to inquire of ourselves, what we are willing to part with for Christ's sake: that is, to relieve his people, to promote his religion, to make his salvation more widely known, can we consent to expend what might otherwise increase our comforts, or gratify vanity, or minister to luxury?

By such sentiments and such practice we may be enabled to secure the love of Christ, as Mary and Martha did. He comes to such, and makes his abode with them. "Whosoever hears the word of God and keeps it, the same is his brother, and sister, and mother."

And now observe the blessedness of this. All these faithful disciples, as in their ordinary life they have a certain guide to direct them, so in their calamities and difficulties they have a resource to which they confidently turn. Lazarus

³ John xii. 3.

was seized with illness. *Therefore his sisters sent unto Jesus saying, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.* It was a comfort to them, that they had one to whom they might communicate their distress. But that might be done to a fellow-creature. Here was more. He was one who could not only comfort, but relieve and save. Neither was it necessary to tell the want, in order that it might be known. Though our heavenly Father expects us to disclose our requests in prayer and supplication, he knows what we have need of before we ask him. So Jesus knew the state of Lazarus. The fact and the event were already present to his mind. No sooner was the message brought to him, than he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.* Not a circumstance happens to one of his flock, but he sees the whole; its beginning and its end; its present and its future consequences. If only that can be truly said, which was said here, *he whom thou lovest*;—if he who is in trouble, in pain, in peril, is one whom Jesus loves:—then we may be sure that the rest follows; this sorrow is not unto death, *but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Still there is an appointed time, and that may not be yet. *When Jesus had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same house where he was.* This is a very instructive fact; and shows how unpromising an aspect things may bear which are intended to have a joyful termination.

There are reasons, doubtless, why God for a while withholds his aid : reasons why he permits sorrow to be long felt, and pain to be long endured : reasons why the mind which is devoted to him, is allowed to remain under a cloud : reasons why he suffers temptations to continue urgent, and disquiet the soul. These reasons we can sometimes perceive, and be comforted by them ; but often they are concealed from us : as in the present case it was impossible to understand, why Jesus should remain two days in the place where he was, after the intelligence had reached him that Lazarus, whom he loved, was on the bed of death. So that the sister, in her anguish, exclaimed, on his arrival, “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” David had much experience of this, and has left us the result : saying, “ I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me ? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy ? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ? Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”⁴

⁴ Ps. xlii.

LECTURE LVI.

JESUS RESOLVES ON GOING TO THE HOUSE OF
LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 7—16.

7. *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.*

8. *His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee ; and goest thou thither again ?*

9. *Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.*

10. *But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

The disciples are here answered in a kind of parable. They remonstrated, as it was natural they should, at what appeared to them his rashness in returning to that district, where the Jews not two months before had sought his life ; and they understood not yet, that no man could take that life from him, till he should be pleased to lay it down of himself. But he reminded them of a higher consideration than that of personal safety—the consideration of duty. *Are there not twelve hours in the day ?* Is there not a certain time al-

lotted to man on earth, and in that time a certain duty to be performed? *If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.* Whoever is found in the way of duty, is safe, and need fear no enemy, no opposition. He has a light to guide him, by which all mankind ought to be directed, the light of God's will: he has also a light to cheer him, the light of God's countenance. *But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.* If any one neglects the counsel of God, and follows the counsel of the world, or the devices of his own heart, *he stumbleth: there is no light in him,* but that which leads to deceive, and ends in disappointment, or in ruin.

This sets an important thought before us. *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* Is there not a span of life assigned to man? And has he not in those twelve short hours a vast work to perform? Has he not a soul to save? Has he not an evil nature to subdue, and a holy nature to acquire? "This I say, brethren, the time is short." Are we using it for its proper purpose? Or, "why stand we here all the day idle?" *The night cometh when no man can work.*

Another point is to be noticed. There is a light of the world, in which if a man walk, he stumbleth not. *But if he walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.* Christ "is come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not abide in darkness."¹ By

¹ John xii. 46.

him we are instructed in the course which we should keep, so as to walk both safely to ourselves and usefully to others. Without him, *there is no light in us*. Our way is error, and our end destruction.

11. *These things said he : and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*²

12. *Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.*

13. *Howbeit Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.*

14. *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

15. *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless, let us go unto him.*

16. *Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus,³ unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

Thomas said this, not knowing what he said : not perceiving that it needed more of divine grace than had yet been bestowed on himself or his brethren, to be faithful unto death. But it was a good thought, and arose from a proper feeling. *Let us also go, that we may die with him.* The friend who has directed us, and given us sweet counsel ; the master who has instructed us, who has “ the words of

² The verb which signifies *to sleep*, was commonly used in Greek for *to be dead*. So, (1 Thess. iv. 15,) “ They that are alive at the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them *that are asleep* :” i. e. have died before.

³ That is, the Twin.

eternal life ;”—if he is resolved to persevere in the path of duty to the end, and that end the grave:—*let us also go, that we may die with him,* and at least show our love and faithfulness, if we cannot prevent the malice of his enemies.

In one sense, though not in the sense intended by the apostle, we are all required to make a like resolve. Jesus set his face steadily to go to Bethany, though well aware that it was the step between him and death. The miracle which he should perform there would excite the Jews still more violently against him, and his death would quickly ensue. His hour was come, the twelfth hour of his day : and he went in perfect foreknowledge “ what death he should die.” God had committed to him a work : and “ how was he straitened till it was accomplished ?” This work was the satisfaction for sin. “ In that he died, he died unto sin.”

We too have a work before us, in the accomplishment of which our safety rests. Our work is the mortification of sin. “ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” This, therefore, is the object which demands our resolution. Let us also go ; go in our hearts and minds to the contemplation of his cross, that we may die with him unto sin. “ It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him : if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” “ Therefore reckon ye your-

selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³

LECTURE LVII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF TO MARTHA AS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

JOHN xi. 17—27.

17. *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

18. *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:*

19. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

20. *Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.*

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

22. *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

23. *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*

24. *Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

³ 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12 ; Rom. vi. 8—11.

25. *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live :*

26. *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeest thou this ?*

Martha here expresses her confident assurance, that her brother should rise again. Such was the belief of all among the Jewish people who rightly interpreted the Scriptures, though it was left for Christ himself to declare in plain terms, that “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”¹ It was left for him to bring life and immortality to clear light, which could not be concealed. Still the obedience of Abraham, the self-denial of Moses, the courage of Daniel, the faithfulness of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of the many prophets whose blood cried out against Jerusalem, prove sufficiently that these all felt confident that they should “attain a better resurrection.” Martha, therefore, spoke the sentiments of all the best and most pious among her countrymen, when she declared her full assurance that *her brother should rise again*. Martha too had already heard the same truth affirmed by her beloved Lord, as the foundation of all he did and taught: as the reason of his coming into the world: namely, that “we must all stand before the judgment seat of God, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be

¹ John v. 28, 29.

good or bad." Therefore Martha had no hesitation in saying, *I know that he shall rise again at the last day.*

Jesus, however, now discloses to her a mystery which she could not yet fully comprehend; and tells her to associate with himself every idea she might conceive of the resurrection. She had believed in a life to come. She had believed that Abel was not allowed to be a loser, and forfeit all existence, "because by faith he offered a better sacrifice than Cain," and fell by his vengeance. She had believed that Enoch, when taken of God, had been taken not to death, but to life: she had believed that God, when he was distinguished as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the God of them still living, and not having ceased to be: she had believed also the words of Christ, when he had warned her to "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but that which endureth unto everlasting life." But she was now taught a further lesson. She was instructed never to think of everlasting life, except as connected with Christ as its author; who alone will be the cause, if the future world be a blessing to any soul of man. He is *the resurrection and the life*: he is "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Martha could as yet know this but imperfectly. The scheme of man's redemption was not yet fully disclosed. And even now that it is fulfilled, and plainly revealed, how common is it, and how dis-

tressing, to hear a future life spoken of as a life that must be happy : to hear death represented as securing ease and comfort :—with no mention of Him who is alone *the resurrection and the life* : with no reference to that faith in him, which God has promised to count unto us for righteousness ? We talk of a better world : we talk of the happiness of heaven : and forget that there is a sting in death—the sting of sin ; and that he alone can remove that sting, who now tells Martha to look on him *as the resurrection and the life*, who giveth us the victory, and in whom whosoever believeth shall not die eternally.

He asks her with pointed earnestness, *Believest thou this ?*

27. *She saith unto him, Yea, Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

This is the truth, which was the basis of all the rest. He was *the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world*. This Martha knew ; and she would soon know more clearly what only his death could reveal, and his resurrection confirm : that “ as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ; ” that when “ all were dead, he died for all, ” that *whosoever liveth and believeth in him may never die*. The body indeed shall die ; shall lose its beauty and its powers ; shall moulder in the grave. The sentence is still without remission, “ Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. ” Still the man shall live ;

shall be conscious of existence : for his soul shall return to God who gave it, to the Saviour who redeemed it, to the Holy Ghost who purified it, and so shall “ever be with the Lord.” And in the end, when this world passeth away, “the dead in Christ shall rise;” he shall “change their vile body that it may be made like unto his glorious body,” and “be with him where he is, and behold the glory which he had with the Father” from the beginning. This is the truth which he has disclosed, and which by his own resurrection he has sealed. He “being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of them that slept;” the earnest of that vast harvest, when all that has been “sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption,” and enter upon a state that shall have no end.

Let all put the question to themselves which Jesus put to Martha, *Believest thou this?* We all believe it; and yet how little is it seen in our lives that we have this conviction within! How few admit the thought, This year, this day, I may die, and dying, enter upon an eternal world! Can we proceed, and say, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my earthly life dear unto myself:” for “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him.” He is *the resurrection and the life*. He is my *life* here on earth : for “the life which I live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God.” He will be my *life* in the world that is to come :

for though he “died for our sins,” he “rose again for our justification ;” and is now set down for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high, that he may fulfil the merciful assurance, that *whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.*

Here then is comfort for a dying bed. Not the comfort of the ignorant, who says, that such must be the end of all, without reflecting on what may follow. Not the comfort of the atheist, who calls death the debt of nature. What consolation does that thought supply ! But here is the Prince of Life, who says, Though thou art dying, though there is a bottomless pit far more dreadful than the grave, *he that believeth in me shall never die.*

LECTURE LVIII.

JESUS ACCOMPANIES MARY AND MARTHA TO THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 28—40.

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*

29. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.*

30. *Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.*

31. *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*

32. *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

33. *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

34. *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.*

35. *Jesus wept.*

36. *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!*

37. *And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

We have sufficient proof here, if proof were needed, that Jesus did not merely bear the form and fashion of a man, but the nature and feeling too. He saw around him a scene of grief: those who were thus mourning, were persons in whom he took that peculiar interest which belongs to what we call *friendship*; and their grief excited in him those emotions of sorrow, that sympathy which we cannot withhold when we witness distress in those we love. *Jesus wept.* Though he was inwardly conscious, that a very short period would elapse before that sorrow was turned into joy, yet the sorrow and the signs of it were present, and

he did not resist the sympathetic feeling which they excited in him. *Jesus wept.*

The Holy Spirit, who guided the sacred writers into all truth, has recorded this circumstance. Had it not been Jesus who wept, had not Jesus, who wept, been the Son of God, it would not have been an important circumstance. But now it is full of consolation: it assures us how deep an interest he feels in those who devote themselves to him, as Martha and Mary did: it encourages us in every thing with freedom and boldness to make our supplications known before him; it teaches us more surely than words could teach us, that we do not commit ourselves to a Master “who cannot be touched with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”¹ Here too we learn another lesson. Philosophy did not teach it; sometimes it pretended to teach otherwise: but he who knows the circumstances and the heart of man, here shows us, that it is no sin and no reproach to be affected with our own sorrows and those of our friends. Nay, it is part of that brotherly kindness which the gospel cherishes, to make all men take a share in the circumstances of their neighbours; to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

38. *Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.*

39. *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

40. *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

It is to be observed here, that Jesus does not remove the stone. He alone could raise the body which lay buried within: but they could take away the stone which closed up the cave. It had been easy for him to say, "Get thee hence, and be cast into the sea:" but to no purpose, as his power was not required.

So towards effecting that greater work, the salvation of the soul, he commands us to strive, and labour, and use all diligence. The exhortations could hardly be stronger, if our diligence could achieve everything, and it were not God, who "of his good pleasure worketh in us both to will and to do." Our safety does depend upon his grace, "which is sufficient for us;" upon his prayer "that our faith fail not:" but, meanwhile, he requires us to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." It is "by the power of God that men are kept, through faith, unto salvation: but nevertheless, "he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Martha opposes the removal of the stone, and urges the state in which the corpse might be expected to be found, as *he had been dead four days*. He rebukes her, but with gentleness: *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

So we are taught, that when God speaks, we must take his promise for a reality, his word as a certainty. Our faith must be to us “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

When Abraham, at God’s command, took Isaac his son and prepared to offer him up in sacrifice, he did this, we are told, believing “that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.”² He had no doubt of God’s performing his original promise, that in the seed of Abraham should “all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Therefore he reasoned with himself, However unaccountable it may appear, the promise cannot fail: God will fulfil his word, and raise my son to life again.

And the example is instructive. It shows us how to use God’s word. Does he say, “Call upon me in the day of trouble?” and can we suppose that he has given this encouragement, and will yet suffer his people to call upon him in vain? Perhaps, like Martha, you have waited through days of darkness and weeks of perplexity; have suffered in spirit, through a powerful temptation, and an unbelieving heart. Yet consider these words as addressed to you;—*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest persevere in the path of duty, thou shouldest see the light of God’s countenance shining out at last through the gloom and cloudiness of thy day? Said I not unto the penitent, “Re-

² Heb. xi. 19.

turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon thee?" Said I not to him that is tempted, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from thee?" Said I not unto the afflicted, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy?" Why then should the mourner say, There is no mercy for me? Why should the offender say, I cannot get the mastery over my evil passions? Why should the afflicted say, "God hideth his face away from me in displeasure?" This is thine infirmity. It must be contended against. For such cases, and for all cases, God has left it written, "Look unto me, and be saved." "They shall seek me, and they shall find me, if they seek me with their whole heart." *If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God.*

This we do believe. But temptation turns our belief into unbelief: and we must seek his Spirit more and more, that we may be able not only to read his promises, but to apply them to ourselves.

LECTURE LIX.

JESUS RECALLS LAZARUS TO LIFE.

JOHN xi. 41—44.

41. *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

42. *And I knew that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

It pleased the Lord on this occasion to show the intimate connexion between himself and his Father. This miracle was especially intended to display his power. He had stated from the first, that the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death, but *for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*. For the glory of God, that the provision which he had made for the recovery of his sinful creatures might be clearly seen, and *that the Son of God might be glorified* : since none could doubt whether he came forth from God, who could thus loose the bands of death, and reanimate the lifeless body. Therefore he makes a direct appeal to Heaven. *Because of the people*

which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43. *And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

44. *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

This exercise of divine power gave fresh force to his assurance concerning every one that believeth on him: "I will raise him up at the last day."¹ What took place in the case of Lazarus, shall take place with all. In the fulness of time, he will call upon "the sea to give up its dead, and death and hell to deliver up the dead that are in them,"² and all nations shall be gathered before him. We are here assured of his power to do so. To restore animation to the lifeless corpse, to reunite the soul to the body after they have been four days separated, is no less the work of Omnipotence, than to raise those who have lain in the grave four hundred or four thousand years. As, then, he here said to Lazarus, *Come forth; and he that was dead came forth*; so will he hereafter say to all who have ever returned to their native dust, *Come forth*. Arise, ye dead, and prepare to meet your God. St. John, who witnessed this miracle, was afterwards permitted in a vision to witness that of which this miracle is an exam-

¹ John vi. 40, &c.

² Rev. xx. 13.

ple: and he writes,—“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”³

But though all shall alike arise, all shall not rise to the same destiny. “All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”⁴ All, therefore, shall hear the same voice, but not all in the same tone. Jesus had loved Lazarus, for he had received him in his true character, and had adhered to him as “the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world.” Therefore when Lazarus awakened from his sleep, and light returned to his eyes, and his mind regained its consciousness, the first object which his eyes and his mind would rest upon, was his friend, his divine benefactor, commanding those around him to loose him from his bands, and set him free in the enjoyment of life and liberty.

But consider for a moment how grievous his case would have been, if, instead of joy, misery had awaited his resurrection. He did see around him those whom he most valued: the sisters to whom he was so dear, and the many friends who had shown their interest in him, and had “come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother.” But suppose these circumstances changed. Suppose that Lazarus had revived, only to be separated from all that he loved; only to be given up to the power of his worst enemy; only

³ Rev. xx. 12.

⁴ 1 John v. 28, 29.

to be consigned to a place of darkness and despair, where no voice was heard but that of remorse and agony: only to know that he was “shut out from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power,” and to dwell in “the blackness of darkness for ever.” We cannot justly picture to ourselves the horror of such a resurrection.

Yet such will be the resurrection of the ungodly and the sinner. They will be called forth, not by a friendly voice inviting them to “enter into the joy of their Lord:” but by the summons of a judge, who makes a difference “between the righteous and the wicked; between him who serveth God, and him who serveth him not.”⁵ They have not done the will of God, they have not “heard the word and kept it:” and therefore will not see before them the countenance of one who is to them as a father, or a brother;⁶ who has more than all the tenderness of the nearest earthly relationship, but of one who is “ashamed of them,” who “never knew them,” even though they might have called him “Lord, Lord.”⁷ The kingdom of heaven is not theirs, nor their society “the spirits of just men made perfect:” their portion is “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

It is needful to bring these thoughts before our minds, that we may use the present time as Lazarus and his sisters did, and secure to ourselves the

⁵ See Mal. iii. 18.

⁶ See Matt. xii. 48. Mal. ii. 33.

⁷ See Matt. vii. 28.

favour of our judge, now that “we are in the way with him.” Provide, in this your day, for a blessed resurrection. Do not so live here, that you may rise to see other redeemed souls entering into the mansions of eternal glory, and “yourselves thrust out.” Do not so live here, that when you rise again to another existence, you must be excluded from the presence of all that is holy, pure, and happy, and take your place for ever among “the angels that sinned.” Accustom yourselves now to hear the voice which shall say at last, *Come forth*. Know it here, when it calls you to repentance and to righteousness, and ye shall know it in the end, when it calls you to “stand before God.” Be his believing and obedient people here, and ye shall not “die eternally.”

LECTURE LX.

THE COUNSEL OF CAIAPHAS THAT JESUS SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH.

JOHN xi. 45—57.

45. *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.*

46. *But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

47. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.*

48. *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

Observe the nature of this inquiry of the chief priests and Pharisees. They do not consider what they ought to do, but what it was their interest to do. They could not deny, that *this man doeth many miracles*. Why then not recognise him as the Christ? Why not follow up the natural impression made on the less prejudiced people, who said, (chap. viii. 31,) “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” For this reason, and no other; that in such case they must resign their pre-eminence, and all belonging to it. Therefore the miracles could not have their proper effect upon them: any more than light upon an eye which is diseased. So afterwards, when the apostles began to proclaim their message, and to confirm it by like works of power, the elders of Israel conferred among themselves, (Acts iv. 16, 17,) “saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.”

After all, what is this, but ordinary practice?

To see the truth, and not to follow it. Why does one man worship wealth? another pleasure? Why are multitudes living as those cannot and must not live, who are heirs of the heavenly kingdom? Is it that they have no belief in a world to come, that they expect no future difference between those who serve God and those who neglect him? Not so: but because present things have an influence over them which they cannot resist, and which nothing but the Holy Spirit can enable them to subdue.

49. *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,*

50. *Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

51. *And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;*

52. *And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

Caiaphas here spoke the language of a worldly man. He first imagines to himself a danger which had no reality. *The Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation.* Jesus might have taught his heavenly truths, and all men might have believed and followed him: and the Romans would have offered no interruption to the disciples of a master whose “kingdom was not of this world.”

Having thus devised an imaginary evil, he flies to injustice to remove it. *It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* It could never be really expedient to commit an unjust deed, and shed innocent blood. And we cannot help remarking, that by this very injustice he made that danger real which he pretended to be avoiding. “When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen,” who cast out his son and slew him? “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen.”¹ And then it was that the Romans did come, and *take away their place and nation.*

There was, however, in the words of Caiaphas, a deeper meaning than he knew. It was not, in the strict sense of the term, a *prophecy*: but it told beforehand that which proved true, *that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

St. John, in his Revelation, describes one of the visions granted him. “I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb.”² This multitude are *the children of God*, then and now *scattered abroad*: living in distant ages, and in distant places, differing in every outward cir-

¹ Matt. xxi. 40, 41.

² Rev. vii. 9.

cumstance, but *gathered together in one*: having “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” united in a common bond on earth, that they “believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;” and hereafter to be united for ever in the kingdom prepared for them. Wherever the gospel is faithfully set forth, we find that God has children who answer to the call of his word, and do not “receive his grace in vain.” Those, for example, were children of God, whom the Lord spoke of to St. Paul in a vision, saying, (Acts xviii. 9,) “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I have much people in this city.” On that encouragement, he continued at Corinth “a year and six months, teaching the word of God amongst them.” And we know how large a congregation of Christians was there “added to the Lord.”

Those, however, are not always among his children, who in regard of outward privileges are nearest to their heavenly Father. That mercy which many of the heathen “received gladly,” the Jews themselves were now putting from them.

53. *Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

54. *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.*

55. *And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.*

56. *Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?*

57. *Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.*

LECTURE LXI.

MARY ANOINTS THE FEET OF JESUS.

JOHN xii. 1—8.

1. *Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.*

2. *Then they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*

3. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*

4. *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,*

5. *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*

6. *This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but be-*

cause he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

It is seen in this transaction, by a very vivid example, what it is to be alive unto God, and what it is to live to this present world. The nature of all life is eagerly to seize whatever nourishes it or is congenial to it. This sister of Lazarus was so conscious of the benefits which she had received from the Lord Jesus, and so filled with her love towards him, that she was sensibly alive to every opportunity of doing him honour. Such an opportunity now offered; he was entertained at a friendly neighbour's house:¹ and it was a custom on great occasions, to show respect for distinguished guests by anointing them with perfume. So she hastened for an alabaster box of ointment which she had, and *anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.* Had she been alive to the opinion of others, she would not have risked their censure; and they did blame her. Had she been alive to her personal gratification, she would have kept this ointment to herself. But her heart was bound up with her Saviour, and only alive to any means of honouring him, at whose feet she had often sat, and received the words of eternal life.

The heart of Judas was in a state entirely different. He was alive only to this present world and its gains. So that when this box of spikenard was broken and emptied of its valuable contents, he at once perceived how his own advantage might have been served by it. The perfume might have been

¹ See Matt. xxvi. 6.

sold : its produce entrusted to his charge ; and an opportunity of fraudulent profit would have been given him. He could not restrain his murmur of indignation : *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ?*

How wise in their generation are the children of this world ! How keenly sensible to the objects before them !

7. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying hath she kept this.*

8. *For the poor always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.*

Jesus, as might be expected, approves and defends the affection and zeal of his disciple. Even if there had been any reasonable ground of blame, the occasion and the intention would have excused what was done. *Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.* Mary could not be aware of his approaching death : but she would lose no opportunity of displaying her love, and it would prove, that no other would remain to her. She would not always, nor indeed ever again, have him with her as now ; and could not do him honour when she pleased. *The poor always ye have with you, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good : but me ye have not always.*²

More, surely, is intimated by this remark, than the mere fact that “ the poor shall never cease throughout the land.” Is it not intended, that

² Compare Mark xiv. 7.

they who have zeal and love like Mary's, may still find occasion of exercising it in a manner agreeable to the Lord?

Nothing in scripture is clearer than the promise, that they who "seek first the kingdom of God," shall not be suffered to want "other things" also. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"³ Yet we know that such are the reverses of life, that many must need assistance. The industry, the prudence, the self-denial of Christ's disciples, undoubtedly secure them against many evils, which those experience who are not guided by a like principle. But still there must be poverty to be assisted, widows to be comforted, orphans to be educated, sickness to be relieved. *The poor always ye have with you.* These then are the objects to which a disposition like that of Mary will direct its care. That love which the Christian bears towards the Saviour, he will show towards all those to whom the Saviour is dear. His faith, his love, his zeal will spontaneously take that course. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" If he has really the love of God in him, he will love those whom God loves, the disciples of Christ Jesus: and if he loves them, he will show his love by assisting them in

³ Matt. vi. 26. See the whole passage.

their difficulties and comforting them in their sorrows.

This was seen in the earliest history of the church, when a famine raged throughout a great part of the Roman empire. The Christians at Antioch heard this, by the report of those who had come from Jerusalem to Antioch. (Acts xi. 29.) “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.” Was there, then, any connexion between the people of Antioch and the inhabitants of Judea? None;—except their attachment to the same Saviour. But as they loved him, though not having seen him; so the brethren also, not having seen, they loved, and supported with that assistance which their present necessities required.

Thus the love and gratitude which all who understand the value of their redemption must feel towards their Redeemer, have a constant object. We have not him with us in the world; but the poor of his flock are always with us: and if he is uppermost in our hearts, we shall seek to do them good, for his sake to whom they are endeared and united by the covenant of faith. So sure is this result, that St. John universally proposes it, in his epistle, as the test of our state before God. “We know,” he says, “that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

LECTURE LXII.

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH.—THE
JEALOUSY OF THE PHARISEES.

JOHN xii. 9—19.

9. *Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.*

10. *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;*

11. *Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*

12. *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,¹*

13. *Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

14. *And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,*

15. *Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.²*

These words make part of a Psalm,³ which contains also many other prophecies, bearing reference to the Saviour. *Hosanna.* "Save now,

¹ Matt. xxi. 1—13. Mark xi. 1—10. Luke xix. 29—38.

² Zech. ix. 9.

³ Ps. cxviii. 25.

I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And these ought to have been the sentiments of the whole Hebrew nation at that day. The nation ought to have known, from the prediction of Daniel, that the time was now at hand when the covenant made with Adam and with Abraham should be fulfilled: the time "determined on (Dan. ix. 24) to finish the transgression, and make reconciliation for iniquity:" the time when "Messiah the prince" should appear. Some individuals did discover this, and were "looking for the consolation of Israel." Such ought to have been the case with the whole nation: they ought to have been generally found united in prayer that "the commandment should go forth;"⁴ that God should remember his holy covenant," and their eyes might "see his salvation." The word "Hosanna, save, Lord, I beseech thee," should not have ascended from the lips of Simeon alone, and Elizabeth, and Anna, and Zacharias, but from the whole people. And then, when the King had appeared, not indeed in the pomp of earthly grandeur, but clothed in robes of meekness and wisdom, and speaking the language of grace and truth, and manifesting forth his glory by deeds of goodness and mercy; he should have been greeted by the adoration of that favoured country, that "peculiar people" which God had chosen for his own. It should not have been left to a few of his followers, or to a multi-

⁴ See Dan. ix. 23.

tude casually assembled, as now, *that were come to the feast*; it should not have been left for these to *take branches of palm trees*, or “*strew their garments in the way*,” and *go forth to meet him*. It should have been the cry of the whole city and the whole land, *Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Blessed is he that cometh as the messenger of God, to announce to us his mercy: how he hath cast our transgressions behind his back, and forgiven our iniquity, and hath sent to us his offer of peace and reconciliation.

So it would have been, if Jerusalem had “*known the time of her visitation*.” But now it was “*hid from her eyes*.” Even the disciples who heard the prophecy applied to him, who saw him fulfilling in the most exact and unexpected manner the words of Zechariah, failed to interpret them. They needed that effusion of the Spirit which should “*bring all things to their remembrance, and guide them into all truth*.” For,

16. *These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

17. *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.*

18. *For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.*

19. *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after him.*

If we could be disposed to wonder, why more of light was not bestowed upon the Jewish public, we see the reason in their conduct. They extinguished the light they had. A miracle was exhibited, in the sight of many, and within the knowledge of the whole city, which might silence all gainsayers. Lazarus was restored from the grave. But what ensued? Did they look on this as giving them the proof they needed? As showing that this was indeed *the King of Israel, coming in the name of the Lord?* *The chief priests, we read, consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.* And now they said among themselves, *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.* Their thoughts are, not how they might discover the truth, but how they might conceal it: not how they might inquire whether Jesus was to be believed, but how they might hinder others from believing.

There must have been a cause for this. We trace it back indeed to the corrupt heart, which is “enmity against God,” and does not “like to retain him in its knowledge.” But this corruption acts through certain channels. And with these Pharisees it was worldliness, love of power, pride of pre-eminence. *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing?* how the distinction ye have been used to enjoy is fast departing from you? *Behold, the world is gone after him.* This was the fastness, in which Satan took his post; this “the palace,” in which “the

strong man armed kept his goods in peace.” And to what lengths do these passions carry those who yield to them? To sins as much against the law of nature within the mind, as against the law of God written in the Bible. See Pharaoh, that he might keep the Israelites under his dominion, giving command that every male child should be destroyed. Follow Saul through his various deeds of cruelty, to which he was excited by his jealousy of David. See Herod, slaying the infants of a whole district from two years old and under, through a distant apprehension that his power might be disturbed. See Pilate reluctantly consenting to the death of Jesus, lest he should be accused before Cæsar, and his government be endangered. See here the Pharisees, *taking counsel how they might put Lazarus to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.*

We are shocked at these enormities. But let us remember, that it is the nature of every evil passion to hurry men into crimes from which an uncorrupted conscience would revolt. No man can say to any sin, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. The axe must be laid to the root of the tree.

Do not therefore stifle, like the Pharisees, the first breath of conviction; do not resist, as they did, the power that might convert them: but “keep thy heart with all diligence,” and pray for light to discover your most “secret faults,” lest they break out into “presumptuous sins.”

LECTURE LXIII.

JESUS INTIMATES THAT THE HOUR OF HIS
CRUCIFIXION IS NEAR AT HAND.

JOHN xii. 20—33.

20. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast :*

21. *The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

22. *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : And again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

These were Gentiles by birth and residence. But from some favourable circumstances, they had become acquainted with the Jewish scriptures and the Hebrew faith, and had turned so far from their national vanities, as to worship the living and true God, the Creator of the world. There were many such, like the centurion, whose servant was healed at Capernaum,¹ like Cornelius, whose “prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God.”² But as they did not profess the religion of the Jews, the apostles hesitated, when they came to Philip, *saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.* The apostles were still strangers to the light which should “lighten the Gentiles.” But Jesus saw through

¹ Matt. viii. 5.

² Acts x. 4.

the mist by which they were surrounded, and knew that the accomplishment of the prophecy was approaching, when kings should come to his light, and the Gentiles to the brightness of his rising.³ He replied in mysterious words.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

The Son of man, coming to his own world, and his own people, had not been received with glory. The only triumph which he knew, was that just now recorded, when a colt, “an ass’s colt,” bore him into Jerusalem, and the multitude spread their garments before him. But now *the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified.* He should burst the gates of the grave, and ascend to “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.”

But it is not his own glory which affects the mind of Jesus. That glory, in its proper sense, admitted of no increase. His glory is man’s happiness, man’s salvation; the bringing immortal souls “from darkness to light,” from death to life, from “the power of Satan unto God.”

And how should this be accomplished? In real truth, the words, Now shall the Son of man *be glo-*

³ Isa. lxii. 2.

rified, must be thus interpreted, Now shall the Son of man be crucified. The foundation of that glory must be laid on the cross, and in the grave. As the *corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die*, in order that it may *bring forth fruit*; and by dying sends up an abundant produce, nourished by itself, partaking of a nature like its own: so should it be in the kingdom of God. The seeds of an abundant harvest, “*bringing many sons to glory*,” must be sown in the grave.

This truth, which began with the Lord himself, extends to his disciples also. As he, their Master, counted not his life dear unto himself: so must those who follow him be prepared, in many trials, to *hate their life*, in this world, (to act as if hating it,) and they should *keep it unto life eternal*.

26. *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

27. *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

28. *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

29. *The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

30. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

31. *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

32. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

33. *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

At first appearance, the event to which our Lord is here looking forward, would be the triumph of *this world*, not its *judgment*: the victory of *the prince of this world*, not its overthrow. As he said to the soldiers afterwards, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." But he extends his view beyond: foresees the consequence of his death, by which in the end the world shall be overcome, and the dominion of Satan broken. He sees that his cross should do what nothing else had done; should be "the victory that overcometh the world." It is not only of his death, but the mode of his death that he speaks. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

And it can be explained. That death was the severest punishment of sin; and he endured it as the penalty of sin. "He bore our sins in his own body;" he died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Now this furnishes to man that proof that he most needs, and is most slow and unwilling to receive—the proof of the sinfulness of sin: that is, of its heinousness in God's sight, and of the consequences to which it leads. In the death of the cross we have a proof of this which no man can deny,* unless he denies

* I do not, of course, mean that this *is denied* by none who profess to receive the Scriptures; but that it cannot be denied with any consistency or show of reason.

the whole history of Christ: a proof, too, from fact. Men may say, that “the worm which dieth not,” and “the fire that is not quenched,” and “the blackness of darkness for ever,” are figurative phrases by which nothing real is intended. Thus multitudes are deceived, as Eve was, and believe that they “shall not surely die,” though they transgress the laws which God hath commanded them to observe. Jesus, *lifted up from the earth*, and bearing the wrath of God upon the cross, speaks a different language. It was sin which reviled and buffeted him; sin which pierced his hands and feet; sin which made him melt in speechless agony; sin which drew from him the last affecting words, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

With this fact before their eyes, none who believe it can venture upon sin as that which God notices it, which no evil follows. By the cross on which the ransom was paid, sin is crucified to them, and they to sin. And so his words are made good; he being *lifted up from the earth*, *draws all men unto him*: gives them a motive and a reason why they should “suffer with him,” should “deny themselves,” should “mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts,” and “follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

LECTURE LXIV.

THE HEARTS OF THE JEWS ARE HARDENED
THROUGH UNBELIEF.

JOHN xii. 34—43.

34. *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever :¹ and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up ? who is this Son of man ?*

35. *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

36. *While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

37. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him :*

38. *That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?*

39. *Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,*

40. *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their*

¹ We have heard out of the Scripture : that is, "the law and the prophets." They had collected this from the general tenour of the prophecies : as, that God would not fail David, but cause his seed to endure for ever : "that "of his government there should be no end."

heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

42. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

43. *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Jesus had given a solemn warning to the Jews ;
Yet a little while is the light with you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

But, adds St. John, *though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.* As Isaiah had given reason to expect, when he prefaced his well-known prophecy, by asking, *Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*² And again, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

We perceive, therefore, that something more is necessary to FAITH, than sufficient evidence. These had sufficient evidence, in the many miracles which he had done. These had sufficient evidence, for many were convinced by it. *Among the chief rulers also many believed on him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should*

² Isa. liii. 1 ; and vi. 10.

be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

It was not, therefore, evidence which was wanting, but a heart to receive evidence, to act upon conviction. And this heart man has not in himself; it is the gift of God, the work of the Holy Spirit. "No man can come unto me, (our Lord had already said,) unless the Father who hath sent me draw him." The case was exactly the same with their forefathers in the wilderness, (Deut. xxix. 2—4,) when "Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Is he as one who "takes up that he layed not down, and reaps that he did not sow?"³ This, we know, can never be. "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live." And he calls upon the inhabitants of the whole earth to witness his dealings with his people: (Isa. v. 3 :) "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard

³ See Luke xix. 21.

that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

The fault, then, must have been in the Jews themselves, whose hearts were hardened. Let us consider their behaviour.

Jesus did among them works beyond the power of man. They could not deny it. What then? Did they come forward in a body, and acknowledge with Nicodemus, "Thou art a teacher come from God?" Or say, like Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" No: they perverted the people's minds by affirming, "This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils:"⁴ and agreed, that "if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."⁵

Again, in the course of Jesus's teaching, many things fell from him which they either could not understand, or did not like to understand. What did they then? Wait for further instruction? Inquire humbly, examine patiently? No. They complained, "This is a hard saying: who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him."⁶

Others heard what they could not refute, and saw what they could not deny. *But, as we are here told, because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

⁴ Matt. xii. 24.

⁵ John ix. 22.

⁶ John vi. 60. 66.

Now without doubt God could have so changed the hearts of all these persons, that they should have cast away their worldly fears, and their presumptuous murmurings, and their obstinate defiance, and have fallen on their knees before Jesus, confessing, “Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” He did this in the case of Saul, and stopped his career of malice and blasphemy. “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.” “And who art thou, O man, who repliest against God?”⁷

But such is not the usual course of his dealings with men. “The earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.”⁸ This is the ordinary rule. While “he that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”⁹ So it proved with this generation;—as Isaiah had foretold, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted.* There is nothing uncommon either in the conduct of the Jews, their hardness of heart; or in its consequence, their rejection. Some of them turned away their eyes from evident truth: could not deny it, but would not see it. How many do the same! cast aside the book which they are unable

⁷ See Rom. ix. 16. 19.

⁸ Heb. vi. 7.

⁹ Prov. xxix. 1.

to refute, but unwilling to be ruled by :—avoid the preacher, who presses closely upon their consciences, with much the same words perhaps as were used towards our Lord himself :—“ he perverteth the people : ” — “ we know not whence he is. ”

Others of the Jews stifled conviction. “ This man doth many miracles : but if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation. ” Or, *because of the Pharisees, did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* How many do likewise ; and are led by some worldly reasons to resist the impression of their conscience ! They engross themselves in continual cares : never leave their minds unoccupied ; feel an inward sense that all is not right, yet do not live as disciples of Christ, because of the habits to which they are attached, the companions or the pleasures which they do not choose to resign.

And shall it be said, that God is unrighteous, if he leaves such hearts in their barren lifeless state, and that in calling them to account hereafter, he is as one who seeks to reap where he has not sown ? The truth is, that men “ WILL NOT come unto Him that they might have life. ” How often would he have gathered his children together, “ even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they WOULD NOT ? ”¹

They WOULD NOT : and have left us a warning “ lest there be in any an evil heart of unbelief, ” so

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37.

as to “receive the grace of God in vain.” Rather “seek the Lord, while he may be found, call upon him while he is near:” and *walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.*

LECTURE LXV.

CHRIST REPRESENTS HIMSELF AS SENT BY THE FATHER, TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xii. 44—50.

44. *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*

45. *And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.*

Our Lord repeats here, what he had often affirmed before, that what we know of the Father, we know of him through the Son. “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

It is not so much respecting the nature or the majesty of God that he speaks, as respecting his will and counsels. And this is what concerns us. In regard to the being and majesty of God, what Job has expressed will be always true: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?” But in regard to the will of God toward man, that is revealed to us in

the gospel; and whosoever *sees* by faith,—that is, *believes in*—Jesus Christ, sees God, whose will he represents, whose counsels he discloses. So in what follows.

46. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

47. *And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

48. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

49. *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*

50. *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

The terms here used are well worth our considering. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.* This clearly implies, that without him, men are in darkness; and it is a just description. Consider what it is to be in darkness. Our Lord himself describes it: “If any man walketh in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” He stumbleth; or he wanders out of the way altogether, and in the end finds that he has wearied himself in vain, that his whole course has been mistaken. Such was the case with the heathen. They worshipped as God they knew not

what; and turned the glory of the Creator into the image of weak and sinful man. Such was the case with the Jews, though in a different way of error: they trusted that they were "Abraham's children," that they had the favour of Abraham's God; and knew not that many should come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom should be thrust out. Such is the case with too many in every age, who think themselves "light," and "walking in the light," when in truth they are in the broad road which leadeth to destruction. They have risen early, and late taken rest, and eaten the bread of carefulness, and find, too late, that they have spent their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. At the close of their earthly life, they have secured to themselves wealth, which cannot purchase heaven; have received the "praise of men," but now want "the honour which cometh from God;" have enjoyed pleasures, which have only proved them to be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" have indulged sins, which have shown that they were not "children of light," but "of darkness."

Meanwhile our Lord has said, *I am come a light into the world*. If so, there will be a manifest difference between those who are following that light, and those who abide in darkness. No less difference than between the blind man and the man who sees; between one who travels in the darkness

of the night, and another whose course is guided by the light of day, and who neither stumbleth nor wandereth, "because he seeth the light of this world."

Consider what that difference will be.

The man will know the end of his journey, and the destination to which he is bound, and the way in which he must walk to reach that end. He has inquired within himself, "Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord?" And here *the light* comes in to his assistance, and displays to him our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who hath made propitiation for our sins." By this light he is guided in his whole progress: he does not look on it as an object to be gazed at, and admired, and then left and forgotten: but he keeps his eyes steadily upon what he has seen, and proceeds, "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith:" looking to him for instruction, for guidance, for help, for support, for victory. He is the Christian's light, the Christian's sun: as evident to his mind, as the sun in the heavens to the bodily eye. He was so represented in the words of prophecy, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."¹ And St. Paul describes the fulfilment of the prophecy:² "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," who said at the beginning, "Let there be light, and there was light," "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

¹ Isa. lx. 1.

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Here, then, is an easy test for self-inquiry. Is he such to you? Do you look up to him as your light, your sun : who rouses you from sleep, that sleep of the soul, in which too many live and die ; who enables you to discover your course on earth ; who conducts you to God ; who points out your path ; who directs your steps ; who animates your heart ; who enlivens all your ways ?

If that is not the case, it would be vain to deny that you are *abiding in darkness*. It would be worse than vain ; for such error would hinder you, as it hindered the Pharisees of old, from coming to him who is able to disperse the mist from before your eyes ; and if persisted in, must issue in the “blackness of darkness” for ever. *The commandment which the Father gave what Jesus should say and what he should speak, that commandment is life everlasting.* But it is also everlasting death to those who reject it. *For he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

LECTURE LXVI.

THE LORD SHOWS, BY A FIGURATIVE ACTION,
THE NECESSITY OF BEING CLEANSED BY HIS
BLOOD.

JOHN xiii. 1—11.

1. *Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

2. *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him ;*

3. *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God :*

4. *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments ; and took a towel, and girded himself.*

5. *After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

This is a remarkable transaction, in regard to the meaning it conveyed. But our different manners make it appear remarkable in respect to that part of it which had nothing really singular. The bathing the feet of those who came as guests, was with the Jews and other people of the East a customary thing. Jesus mentions it as an attention

which he had reason to expect, though he did not receive it, from Simon the Pharisee, by whom he was entertained. (Luke vii. 44.) He says, "Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."

The action itself, therefore, had nothing singular. The wonder was, that *he* should do it: that he who ought to have been "ministered unto," should undertake to minister: that he should "gird himself, and come forth to serve them" who called him Master and Lord. And when Peter remonstrated, the answer given to him shows that it is not even the humble and condescending character of the transaction, but its figurative nature, which was our Lord's chief object, and which we are bound in the first place to consider.

6. *Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

8. *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

9. *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

10. *Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

11. *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

We perceive at once that there is a meaning here beyond the mere circumstance to which the words related. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* Jesus could not mean, that unless he performed this servant's office for Simon, Simon could have no part with him; neither if this were the purport of his words, was it one which could not be then explained, but he *should know hereafter.* That part of it from which he was to learn a lesson of humility, was, in fact, explained immediately: *whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*

But the principal object of this transaction could not be explained, till the blood had been really shed, which was soon about to flow, and to open "a fountain for sin and for all uncleanness."¹ "The blood of Christ," we know, "cleanseth from all sin." This was prefigured under the law, as St. Paul expressly shows, by the use of blood in the service of the sanctuary. (Heb. ix. 21, and 13, 14.) "Moses sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission. If then the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

¹ Zech. xiii. 1.

This then was the meaning of our Lord in what he said to Peter : *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* Sin attaches to thy nature ;—for “ that which was born of the flesh, is flesh : ”—sin attaches to thy conscience ; for “ what man is he that liveth and sinneth not ? ” But thou mayest be “ washed, be sanctified, be justified,” by the blood of the everlasting covenant,² in which God has promised remission of sin to the disciples of his beloved Son. Here thou mayest wash and be clean. But *if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

The apostle now perceived his Master's purpose, and eagerly claims his offer. *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* Utterly corrupt by nature, I need to be completely cleansed. The Lord replies, *He that is washed* (has been washed) *needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* Here another truth is conveyed under a figure. One who has used the bath, as was their constant custom, needs not to bathe again ; but returning home, or visiting the house of a distant friend, he might accept that ordinary hospitality which Simon did not offer ; he might *wash his feet* on entering in. This answers to the state of the soul which is in covenant with Christ. As the body is purified by bathing, the soul is purified by his blood : and they who have sought this fountain, and made it theirs by faith, may be compared to those who have already used the bath, and *are clean every whit.* So, says our Lord, ye, my apostles, who

² 1 Cor. vi. 11. 1 Pet. i. 19.

have believed in me, are clean : and “ if ye continue in my word,” ye need no other purification. The evil that is in the world will still defile the nature which is too liable to be defiled : but the same blood will cleanse, applied by habitual repentance. Still “ ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.” *Ye are clean ;—but not all.*

Not all. Judas had no part in that acceptance, which had been granted to the other apostles. Outwardly washed, he had enjoyed the same privileges, and been partaker of the same cleansing : but he had never been really washed, or sanctified, or justified, because his heart had never really applied itself to the Redeemer. It was not that he had once been in a justified state, accepted before God, and was now about to forfeit the favour which he had enjoyed. He had never been accepted by him who sees the heart, and knew the ineffectual, unsubstantial nature of the faith which he professed in Jesus. *Therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

How is it with ourselves ? We have all one Lord, one creed, one baptism. Have all the same heart ? a heart which has been sprinkled with that blood, which “ cleanseth from all sin ?” For observe how clearly it is shown here, that no one has any part in “ the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” unless he has been “ washed in the blood of the Lamb,” and is purified by his Spirit from the corruption of nature, and the pollution of sin. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

LECTURE LXVII.

THE APOSTLES ARE EXHORTED TO MUTUAL CONDESCENSION; AND WARNED, THAT THERE IS A TRAITOR AMONG THEM.

JOHN xiii. 12—30.

12. *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ?*

13. *Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am.*

14. *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*

15. *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord : neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

We are here instructed in another, though secondary, object of this transaction. It was to remain as a perpetual lesson of humility and condescension. This too is particularly insisted on. *Know ye what I have done to you ?* Ye venerate me, and ye have reason, as your *Master and Lord* : as having a far higher superiority above you, than any one of my disciples can ever have above his brethren. *If I then, your Lord and Master, have done towards you what is properly a servant's office, I have given*

you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. The disciples of Christ are called to many acts of self-denial, many duties which may seem humiliating and degrading. The abodes of poverty, of disease, and sometimes of vice and wretchedness, must be visited. This requires self-denial: it is painful in itself: and it often excites the scorn of others, who are strangers to the constraining motive. So likewise they must reprove those who “hate to be reformed,” and instruct those who are deaf to instruction, and exhort those upon whom exhortation is thrown away. For this they need encouragement. Their Lord and Master has given them an example: and *the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.* How often has this consideration excited the Christian to works of charity, and supported him in scenes of humiliation, to which nothing except the love of Christ and the example of Christ would have constrained him!

The apostles, too, we must observe, had need of a lesson of humility. It does not appear in St. John's narrative, but it is recorded by the other evangelists, that on this very occasion “there was a strife among them, which should be accounted greatest.”¹ And the very duties which hereafter they would be called to, were likely to give this course to the corruption of the heart; to be the occasion of rivalry and jealousy. In the earliest period of the church, St. Paul was obliged to cor-

¹ Luke xxii. 24. Matt. xviii. 15—35. Mark ix. 33.

rect this unchristian spirit. He writes to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. i. 11,) "It hath been declared unto me that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas." And again, to the Philippians, (Phil. i. 15,) "Some indeed preach Christ of envy, and strife, and contention." It was an evil which would arise, in part, even from the esteem in which the christian teachers were held on account of the benefits which they conferred.

Therefore he proceeds, (ii. 3—7,) "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." With what force does this exhortation come, when the apostle adds, "Let this mind be in you, *which was also in Christ Jesus*: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;" nay, took upon him the office of a servant towards the disciples whom he had chosen, and left a standing example to all that should believe in him through their word, that *they should do as he had done*.

But there are many who neither regard the precept nor the example. Many are "hearers, and not doers of the word: deceiving their own souls." *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. Nay, even among the twelve, there was one who, hearing the words and seeing the works of divine goodness, still remained the slave of sin and Satan.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen, but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*²

19. *Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

21. *When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

22. *Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.*

23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

24. *Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.*

25. *He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?*

26. *Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop,³ when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the Son of Simon.*

27. *And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.*

28. *Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.*

29. *For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.*

30. *He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.*

² See Ps. xli. 9, where David thus speaks of the traitor Ahi-thophel. The metaphor is taken from the restive horse or ox which lift their heel against their feeder.

³ More properly, a slice, or morsel.

God has mercifully provided that we know the steps which led to the treachery of Judas, as well as the crime itself. The steps by which he came to this last bad act, were covetousness and fraud habitually indulged : long practised in despite of all that might have raised his heart from earth to heaven. The occasion was now offered, by which he might still further gratify his ruling passion. "The chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." He was now within their reach : and *Satan entered* into the heart of Judas, and instigated him to fulfil his agreement with the chief priests, and claim the "thirty pieces of silver," for which he had covenanted with them.⁴ Thus was the scripture fulfilled, *He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.* And thus also is the whole of scripture fulfilled, which teaches us that the heart is deceitful above all things : which warns us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation : which assures us that our adversary the devil is always on the watch, seeking whom he may devour : and that when he finds a heart open and ready for his reception, he enters in and dwells there ; and "the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Truly "the Son of man goeth, as it is written of him : but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed."

⁴ See Matt. xxvi. 14—16. Luke xxii. 22. Luke xi. 24—26.

LECTURE LXVIII.

THE APOSTLES WARNED OF CHRIST'S REMOVAL,
AND EXHORTED TO MUTUAL LOVE.

JOHN xiii. 31—38.

31. *Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*

32. *If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.*

33. *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me : and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come ; so now I say to you.*

34. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

The time was now close at hand when the disciples of our Lord should be left without the guardian who had hitherto directed them. He prepares their minds for this. *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* The glory which he sought in taking man's nature, the glory of "bringing many sons to glory," is now about to be secured by his death upon the cross. The ransom will be soon paid, which shall set free the prisoners of Satan, and exalt his Conqueror to

everlasting honour. And so likewise shall *God be glorified in him*: his justice, his holiness, his goodness, will be made manifest to the world.

But the disciples, as he had before said, would “weep and lament.” They would seek him to instruct, to direct, to encourage them, and seek him in vain: for *whither he was going*, it was not yet their time to come.

One thing, and only one, would be a bond of strength and consolation;—mutual love. And this he presses upon them. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

It appears strange that this should be called a *new commandment*. Moses had enjoined it, in his law: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And even perverted as his law had been by the corruptions of the Jewish teachers, they still retained the precept, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour.”

True. They retained the precept. But they did not observe the practice. Self-importance, self-love, self-interest prevailed over it; and there wanted a sufficient motive to overcome these selfish feelings. St. Paul could reflect upon his past life as a Pharisee, and say that he had “lived according to all the commandments of the law blameless.” But he is conscious of the change which had taken place in his feelings towards other men, since he had become a disciple of Christ. From the ground on which he was then standing he looks back upon his former state, the way he had passed over, and says, “We ourselves also were

sometimes foolish and disobedient, *living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*"¹ How different such a temper, from that strong and warm affection which breathes in his epistles: and which did not express itself more in words than in actions; making him "all things to all men,"² if by any means he might save some; and disposing him to sacrifice every interest and inclination to the welfare of his christian disciples.

Because, though the commandment was not new, the motive to observe it was new, as well as the standard according to which it should be followed. *As I have loved you:* according to the same manner and degree. Here is the measure of love pointed out: here is the manner in which it will be shown. The measure, and the manner. Imitation of such love will indeed fall sadly short: but this is the pattern offered us, the pattern by which we are to work: that looking at that which is perfect, we may be satisfied with nothing less: and if we do not reach the mark, may at least advance in the line towards it. *As I have loved you:*—with a disinterested love; with an active love; with a self-denying love:—by love of this nature *shall all men know that ye are my disciples.*

And the commandment so enforced, has not been without effect. If we judge of the apostles themselves as we would judge of other men, we must see that their union, agreement, and mutual co-operation were as great a wonder as any other which attended the first ages of the gospel.

¹ Titus iii. 3.

² See 1 Cor. ix. 19—22.

And wherever their doctrines were received, love and charity followed in the train. The general kindness and good-will which distinguished the christian communities was an astonishment to the heathen, who used to say, "See how these Christians love one another!" And in all ages since, the motive here expressed—that *ye love one another as I have loved you*—has induced those who have been actuated by it to encounter trials, submit to sacrifices, and use exertions in behalf of others, to which this principle alone could have stimulated them. It is naturally a part of love, to be kindly disposed towards all who are dear to those who are dear to ourselves. And this feeling is here called into exercise. They whom we can help or comfort, they who are in want or tribulation, are dear to him who died for us. And "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."³

The purport of our Lord in thus addressing his disciples could no longer be concealed from them; slow as they were to apprehend it.

36. *Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*

37. *Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.*

38. *Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*

³ See 1 John iv. 11.

How little men know themselves ! how little can it be affirmed beforehand how they will act in untried circumstances, or bear an unexpected temptation !

But that which is impossible with man, is possible with God : and the power of the Holy Spirit gives a strength which nature has not. He who, within a few hours of the time when these words were spoken, wanted boldness enough to confess his Lord, even though that confession had no certain danger ; he was afterwards prepared to *lay down his life for his sake*, not in word only, but with foreseen and determined purpose. For thus he writes to his fellow Christians : “ I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me :—hath showed me when he said, *Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*

He followed him here, to a cruel death : but he has also followed him to heavenly glory : “ receiving the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.” He was enabled to “ rejoice ” in being thus called to follow him, “ inasmuch as he was made partaker of Christ’s sufferings : that when his glory shall be revealed, he might be glad also with exceeding joy.”⁴

“ Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator ; ”⁵ that “ whether we live, we may live unto the

⁴ 1 Peter iv. 13.

⁵ Ibid. 19.

Lord; or whether we die, we may die unto the Lord: that whether we live or die, we may be the Lord's." ⁶

LECTURE LXIX.

JESUS COMFORTS HIS APOSTLES, DECLARING
TO THEM HIS UNION WITH THE FATHER.

JOHN xiv. 1—14.

1. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

2. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

4. *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

Our Lord here comforts his disciples, and strengthens them more and more, in preparation for his approaching removal. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Ye have been taught to believe in God, who "in the beginning created all things:" *believe also in me,* as one with the Father; as having come from God, and now returned to God from whom I came:

⁶ See Rom. xiv. 8.

returned too, to fulfil the purpose for which I became flesh and have dwelt among you: believe in me, as having *gone to prepare a place for you* in the kingdom of God. If there might not be admittance for you in that kingdom, *I would have told you*. I would not have suffered you to leave all that is valuable upon earth; I would not have suffered you to undergo persecution, and revilings, the scorn of friends and the cruelty of enemies for my sake and the gospel's, if *in my Father's house* there had not been *many mansions*, an abundant reward, an infinite extent of glory.

These expressions are intended to suit the ideas of men. A parent, who was about to leave his children for a while, might cheer them in the same manner. Your heart is naturally troubled, because I am to be separated from you, and ye are left alone: but be of good cheer; I go to prepare another and a happier abode for you, where we shall always be together; and when the time is arrived and all is ready, *I will come again and receive you unto myself*.

So we believe that it will be, according to the description given by the apostle: (1 Thess. iv. 16 :) “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

And we do comfort ourselves, when trouble is needed ; and we deny ourselves, when self-denial is needed ; and we govern ourselves by rules which are always needed, trusting to these words.

Here, however, some of the children interpose, and seek for further assurance and information.

5. *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way ?*

6. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

7. *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also ; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

8. *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

Thus slowly did the apostles learn to comprehend the whole of Jesus's character. They acknowledged him as a prophet, sent to announce God's will ; nay, more, they acknowledged him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. But they scarcely yet perceived him to be the representative of the Father, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person:" *the way*, by whom alone men have access to the Father: *the truth*, the reality and substance of all those types and shadows under which God had hitherto been partly concealed, and partly manifested: *the life*, who hath "life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will:" who communicates a spiritual power to all who apply themselves to him.

Can we wonder that they were slow to under-

stand this? What do we still often find? May not men long have the Scriptures in their hands, which from the beginning to the end verge towards one point, the history of REDEMPTION:—may they not long be in the habit of hearing discourses, which set forth the way of eternal life:—may they not long be conversant with prayers, which are offered in the Saviour's name: and yet have no knowledge of him, as *the way, the truth, and the life*; no spiritual discernment of that righteousness, which is “unto all and upon all them that believe?” These are spiritual truths, “spiritually discerned;” and can only penetrate the heart, as the heart is opened by the Spirit of God.

Jesus replies, by declaring the fact, how he was *in the Father, and the Father in him*: that whoever *had seen him, had seen the Father also*. This would be further understood, when he should have ascended to the Father, and the Holy Ghost be more largely shed abroad upon their hearts: “receiving the things of Christ and showing them.”¹

9. *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

10. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*

11. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

¹ John xvi. 14.

12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

13. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

14. *If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.*

The apostles had already seen great proofs that Jesus was one with God: they might *believe for the works' sake*: the works which they had seen him do. But greater proofs still remained to be hereafter seen: nay, to be done by the apostles themselves: because he was *going to the Father*: because his work of redemption should be finished; because the Holy Ghost should descend, and carry on to their completion the things which had been begun.

We may be surprised to hear of *greater works*, than the making the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the dead to revive. But it is a greater work, to overcome sin; to reclaim the wicked from the error of their way; to lead the spiritually blind into the paths of holiness; to rouse those who are spiritually dead to the life of righteousness. It was a great work to heal the cripple, as John and Peter did, (Acts iii.) as he “lay at the gate of the temple.” This they were enabled to do *in the name* of Jesus, and *asking in his name*. Such was the promise. They believed, and acted upon their belief. Peter said to the man, “In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk.” And this name, through faith in his name, made the man strong; yea, the faith which is by him gave him

perfect soundness in the presence of them all. This was a fulfilment of the promise given. But there was a further promise. *Greater works than these shall he do.* This too was accomplished: for it was a greater work, when three thousand of the Jewish assembly, convinced by the words of Peter, “repented, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ;” even of him, whom not two months before they had “taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and slain.”

Let this encourage all to go forward in the same strength, trusting that they may accomplish the same great work in their own hearts, through the like might and power. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” And to him who has achieved this first victory, the final promise shall be made good: “To him that overcometh, I will give to sit with me on my throne.” *I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

LECTURE LXX.

JESUS ENCOURAGES THE APOSTLES WITH THE
PROMISE OF A COMFORTER.

JOHN xiv. 15—17.

15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

16. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ;*

17. *Even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Words could scarcely have been more plainly spoken, than those in which the distinct persons of the Trinity are here revealed to us in their several offices. Christ, as the Redeemer, *prays the Father*, and he shall send *another*, here described under the title of *the Spirit of Truth*, and of *Comforter*, who shall not, like the Son, appear for a little while, and then be seen no more ; but shall abide with the disciples of the Son to the end of the world. In their proper essence, these three characters are revealed as one. But they are also revealed as bearing distinct parts in the work of man's salvation. The Father provides the plan. The Son undertakes the means. The Holy Ghost perfects the work in the soul of man. And the

end is, that Christ may be “the author of eternal life to all that obey him.” “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.”¹

We are further told, that the presence of the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, is the peculiar privilege of Christ’s disciples. Him *the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Throughout his discourses here, the Lord distinguishes his disciples from the world, and the world from his disciples. As when he says, “A little while, and *the world* seeth me no more: but ye see me.” “*The world* shall rejoice, but ye shall weep and lament.” And afterwards,—“I pray not for *the world*, but for them which thou hast given me.” “They are not *of the world*, even as I am not of the world.”

And *the world*, he assures us,—“the children of this generation,” “the children of this world,” the lovers of this world, *cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And for an evident reason. It is the heart which receives him: and their hearts are occupied with other things; are filled with the business, and the cares, and the pleasures, and the pursuits, and the honours of this life, so that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The rich young man who inquired of our Lord concerning eternal life; he could not receive the Spirit of truth: for his heart

¹ Ps. cxlv. 3.

was full of his “great possessions.” The Pharisees could not receive the Spirit of truth: for their hearts were full of the love of this world’s praise. Martha, sister of Lazarus, was in danger of closing her heart against the Holy Spirit, while she was “careful and troubled about the many things” of this present time, which “choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” Whilst things visible engross the eye, we cannot have “the evidence of things not seen.” Whilst the things cared and hoped for are the things belonging to this world, the heart cannot rise and aspire to him, who is only seen and known by faith.

It is, however, the mark of Christ’s disciples, that they do *receive* the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. The Lord says; *But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* It is his office to prepare them for that to which they are called: for the service and duties assigned them here, and for everlasting glory hereafter. And in the performance of this office, he dwelleth with them, first, to instruct them. He, says the Lord afterwards, “he shall guide you into all truth.” “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.” He takes the words, the doctrines, the warnings, the promises of Christ, and shows them to the eyes of the understanding. As St. Paul declares, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”² One and the same Spirit worketh that

² 1 Cor. ii. 10.

diversity of gifts and operations, which the people of God exercise in the vocation to which they are called.³

Secondly, the Holy Ghost *dwelleth in them*, to renew and sanctify their hearts. “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”⁴ Thus the Corinthians had become what they were, new creatures, with whom old things had passed away; being “sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”⁵ The apostle reminds them, that their bodies were “the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was in them.” For “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”⁶

Further, the Holy Ghost *is in* the disciples of Christ, to support and uphold them in the time of trial. So St. Paul prays for the Ephesian church, that they may be “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.”⁷ In the contemplation of the perils by which he was encompassed, he encourages himself, “knowing that this shall turn to his salvation through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”⁸ Trusting to his promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” he could encounter any danger, and meet any difficulty to which his faith exposed him.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 8—12. Eph. iii. 5. ⁴ Rom. viii. 9.

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

⁶ Rom. viii. 9.

⁷ Eph. iii. 16.

⁸ Philip. i. 19.

And lastly, the Holy Ghost *is in* the disciples of Christ, to comfort them. It is through him that the promise is fulfilled, “I will not leave you comfortless.” He is especially distinguished as *the Comforter*, who “helpeth our infirmities:” removes our doubts, and calms our fears: “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God: is “sent forth into our hearts,” that we may “come boldly to the throne of grace,” as children to a father who “spareth his only son that serveth him.”⁹

“What manner of men, therefore, ought we all to be, in all holy conversation and godliness,” that we may not “grieve the Spirit of God,” and provoke him to depart from us? “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”¹ In his presence is life, and joy, and righteousness, and peace. And to vex and resist him, by opposing his holy suggestions, is to drive the author of these blessings from our heart, and count ourselves unworthy of eternal life.²

⁹ See Gal. iv. 6. ¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17. ² See Rom. xiv. 17.

LECTURE LXXI.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS PROMISED TO THOSE
WHO KEEP THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 18—24.

18. *I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.*

19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more ; but ye see me : because I live, ye shall live also.*

20. *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

In these words our Lord leaves with his disciples a clear and distinct promise of comfort and support peculiar to themselves, and derived to them not through an earthly but a heavenly channel.

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more. I shall be removed from the sight of the eye, and the hearing of the ear. *But ye see me : I will come to you : I will not leave you comfortless,* ¹ as children who have lost their earthly parent : *because I live, ye shall live also.* Because I live. Though in the sight of men I seem to die, I shall rise again from the

grave, and ascend to my Father, and be for ever with him: therefore *ye shall live also*, through the exercise of my power. Your earthly life shall be under my charge. “no man shall set on you to hurt you,” except as I see reason to permit it so to be; and your spiritual life shall be supported by a source which never fails, a source which no man knows, except those who are nourished by it. But ye shall know it; know its reality, and know its origin; its supply shall be a proof to you that *I am in my Father*, and partake of all his power: and that *ye are in me*, and supported by my union with you.

Is all this a hidden or inward union, of which there is no outward evidence? There is a visible and external proof by which those are known to whom the privilege belongs. Men might profess to feel or to enjoy the love of Christ; as numbers have professed it with their lips, whilst their hearts were far from him: but there is a test to prove them by: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

22. *Judas² saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

23. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

² Judas or Jude; called also Lebbaeus, or Thaddeus.

24. *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings : and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

These words of our Lord could not be easily comprehended by a person not accustomed to turn his thoughts within, and to observe what passes in the heart. So that the apostle Jude inquires how it could be that they should see him, or that he should manifest himself to them, when the world saw him no more.

Jesus does not explain to him *how* this could be, but repeats the assurance ; I and *my Father will love the man that keepeth my words, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*³

In this clear and decisive manner is expressed the spiritual presence of God with his people. This is not unusual in Scripture. He who has made God his portion is said to dwell with God ; as (Ps. xci. 1,) “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” And again, God is said to make his abode with those who are his people. (Is. lvii. 15.) “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

This is indeed a great promise : but not greater than is fulfilled, sensibly and certainly fulfilled. Its fulfilment is evident in many ways. First,

³ The Father and Son : personally distinct, though essentially the same : therefore the plural form is used ; *we will come unto him.*

by the gradual departure of those other inmates which ought never to have a place in the heart, but which will surely abide there till the Spirit of God dislodge them; evil passions, worldly cares and desires. And then, the presence of God will be made manifest by such an habitual state of the soul as nothing else could produce. The disposition of the heart is changed: perhaps from what it has been formerly; certainly from what it would be, if God were not dwelling there.

This change is evident, especially in two particulars. First, an indifference towards worldly things. The affections are set "on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God:" and therefore worldly pleasures have little power to interest: worldly advantages are light in the balance, when weighed against things eternal: it is perceived, that worldly riches may bring danger, as well as purchase enjoyment: and thus they that gain, are enabled to be as though they possessed not; and they that lose as though they lost not; and they that are honoured, to regard the honour which cometh from God only; and they that are lightly esteemed for Christ's sake, to count it their glory. Thus there is plain evidence that he who is not with all men has *come unto them, and is making his abode with them.*

And this is seen, further, in the comfort, and tranquillity, and peace of mind, which they enjoy. As the blessings of life do not unduly transport them, so neither do its trials and sorrows overwhelm them. Exactly at the time when it is

needed, God makes his presence known, and cheers their hearts, as the sun cheers the earth with a genial ray of warmth and comfort which nothing can either exclude or imitate. So that the Christian can sometimes say that the “bed of languishing” has been dearer to him than the bed of health: the days of privation sweeter than the days of possession; the season of sorrow more worthy to be remembered than the season of rejoicing; because he has enjoyed the presence of God in a higher measure and a more perceptible manner. In the multitude of sorrows which he had in his heart, that comfort has refreshed his soul. As the hiding of God’s face, the want of spiritual light can turn the brightest earthly scene to gloom and darkness; so the manifestation of his Spirit in the soul can enliven the house of mourning, and clothe the distressed heart with the “garment of praise.”

Is this blessing desirable, so that nothing else can be compared with it? See then the way, the only way, in which it may be obtained, and cherished, and secured. *Jesus said, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

LECTURE LXXII.

THE APOSTLES ARE CONSOLED, IN THE PROSPECT OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE, BY THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST AND INWARD PEACE.

JOHN xiv. 25—31.

25. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.*

26. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

The apostles are here taught to look for that divine illumination and assistance which they would so greatly need, both in their condition as men, and in their character as messengers of the Gospel. The things which Jesus *had spoken unto them, being yet present with them*, they could not possibly recall to mind by their own natural powers, so as to proclaim the Gospel revelation through the world. For this He would provide, whose mercy had planned the whole. The Father would *send the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, and he should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance*. He should teach them to apply to their own hearts the instruction and consola-

tion which Christ had given : and he should teach them to convey the same to others. They could not have spoken at all, or certainly we could have derived no satisfaction from their words, if we were not assured that they “spoke not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but that which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”¹

Nor must it ever be forgotten that the same “unction from the Holy One” is equally needful to those who receive the Gospel, and to those who teach it. Paul spoke, and disclosed the words of Scripture : (Acts xvi. 14 :) but “the Lord opened the heart,” that it should “attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” Truth shines in a dark place, till the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to perceive it. “Paul planteth, and Apollos watereth ; but it is God which giveth the increase.”² “The preparations of the heart are from the Lord.”³

But still further proof of this is seen in what follows :

27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

28. *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I.*

29. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

30. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 13.

² See 1 Cor. iii. 6.

³ Prov. xvi. 1.

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

Good reason had our Lord to say, that the disciples, *if they loved him*, if their love had its proper exercise, would *rejoice* that he was now returning to his Father : when both he himself would be in possession of his own glory, and when he would be able to succour those who believed in him with all his Father's power. Now *the prince of the world* prevailed, who *hath nothing in Christ* : nothing in common with him, no concern, no interest in him. But as he warned the disciples beforehand of all that should come to pass, and by that prophecy confirmed the faith which would otherwise be shaken by his death ; so would he also secure to them a comfort which should supply all their need. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*

It might seem a vain promise. We remember the warning which he himself had uttered, “ They shall put you out of the synagogue. Yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doeth God service.” “ They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.”⁴

Is it not strange, then, that he should say to persons whom he forewarned to expect circumstances like these, *Peace I leave with you*? When we speak

⁴ Luke xxi. 12.

of peace as any man's lot, we think of an easy, tranquil course of life; of the promise of outward comforts; of the security of a quiet home; of the sweets of domestic affection. But none of these were ever to belong to the apostles.

There must be, then, a sort of peace which is independent of these things, independent of outward circumstances: not always accompanying them, when they are favourable; not always disturbed by them, when they are adverse.

Certainly there is a peace which this world can neither give nor take away: and which He alone can bestow, who has access to the soul, who can reach and rule the heart. How little can outward comforts effect, when the mind is disturbed, perplexed, and ill at ease! Offer all that *the world giveth* to the man who has lost what in the world he most valued—his fortune, or his child, or the wife of his bosom—what can it do for him? Does it restore to him peace?

Yet there is something which can give peace, even in an hour like that: the same which gave comfort to the apostles under persecution and affliction. It is that whisper of God's favour and mercy and loving-kindness, which the Holy Spirit pours into the heart, and calms its worldly anxieties and sorrows, as when oil is poured upon the troubled waves. Supported by this, while the chief priests and the elders "were filled with indignation," and "cut to the heart," in all the misery of alarm and hatred and malice, the apostles calmly "departed from the presence of the coun-

cil, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.”⁵ Supported by this, the hearts of Paul and Silas enjoyed a tranquillity which might well be envied by their persecutors, though many stripes were laid on them, and they were “thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks.” (Acts xvi. 25.) “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”

This was to have peace: this was to experience the fulfilment of that promise, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

Who can read this promise, and witness its accomplishment, as it may be daily witnessed, without an earnest desire that the like peace may be attained and possessed by themselves?

It is offered them, it may belong to them. The invitation is clear and universal. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; and YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS. For my yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.”

⁵ Acts v. 41.

LECTURE LXXIII.

CHRIST REPRESENTS HIMSELF UNDER THE
FIGURE OF A VINE.

JOHN xv. 1, 2.

1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

A natural image is here used, to explain a mysterious truth, by comparing it with what is more familiar. It is a mysterious truth, that the disciples of Christ should derive their spiritual existence and nourishment from him : that he should dwell in them ; that they should be one with him, and he with them. But there is a fact in nature to which it may be compared ; the dependence of a branch upon its stem : especially when a branch is taken from its parent tree, and grafted into the stock of another, and becomes one with that other, and receives its nourishment and vigour from it. Our Lord seizes upon this image : led, perhaps, to do so, because he and his disciples might be seated together under the shelter of a vine, or because many might be flourishing around them. And he

makes use of the example, to show what he was to the disciples, and the disciples to him, and the Father to both. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

The business of the husbandman is to plant the vine, and dress and tend it. He first places the tree in the spot where he designs that it should grow; and afterwards he continues to watch the branches, and treats them as they require. Some he prunes, and some he takes away.

The first work, the planting of the vine, God had now performed. The soil had been long preparing, under the cultivation of the law and the prophets: and now the tree was set in the ground, planted in Judea, whose branches should extend into all lands, and whose "leaves should be for the healing of the nations."

Let all contemplate it as a "tree of life," growing within their reach, and in their own country; and having in itself the blessings of everlasting happiness. For such is *the true vine*, which the love of the heavenly husbandman has provided for the world.

Observe now the husbandman's treatment of the branches of this vine. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.* This is the Father's purpose, that they who belong to Christ, should bear the fruit of "love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance." And if they bear

them not, the purpose of the husbandman is disappointed, and such an unfruitful branch is set aside as useless, and left to wither. Perhaps it may be retained for a while; that takes place, which is spoken concerning the barren fig-tree: ¹ the husbandman "digs about it, and dungs it: and if it bear fruit, well;" and if not, it is at last cut down, and allowed to "cumber the ground" no longer. Should any who profess to be united with Christ as the true vine, either be producing evil fruit, or not producing any fruit at all, that very barrenness is a proof that they no longer make part of the vine; they receive no nourishment from the stem: "whoso abideth in Christ, and Christ in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." But every branch "which beareth not fruit, is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."²

We turn now to the branches which are of a different sort: and what is said of them deserves our best attention. *Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

This still describes the work of the husbandman.

The branch on which he bestows his care and labour, is the bearing branch. And this he diligently prunes: removes useless shoots and leaves, clears away whatever is likely to injure the produce: employs his knife; sometimes to appearance roughly, but in truth discreetly, and to a wise end. Such is also the care of our heavenly

¹ Luke xiii. 8.

² Heb. vi. 8.

Father over the branch in Christ which beareth fruit. *He purgeth³ it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* And various are the means employed by him. He tries his people in different ways; sometimes it might seem severely, but ever with a merciful design. How little could it be discerned by their outward condition in this life, who those are whom God really regards with most favour! Often they are rather distinguished by their pre-eminence in affliction. Illness preys upon their strength; cuts short their active usefulness. They suffer under some painful and lingering disease. Their nearest and dearest connexions are in distress, or are taken from their side, and every source of earthly enjoyment is taken with them.

This may be sometimes a chastisement, especially if the blessings of a more prosperous course have not been rightly used: if they have made the Christian careless, instead of thankful; luxurious or covetous, instead of temperate and liberal; indolent and self-indulgent, and not "zealous of good works." In such case, if God does not cast him forth as a withered branch altogether, he will purge him with the knife of adversity; he will cut off "the desire of his eyes," which has been loved more than the Author of every good: will take away his earthly treasure, which he is preferring to treasure in heaven.

But afflictions are not always chastisements. We do not read that Job, in his prosperity, was either proud, or sensual, or uncharitable: we know

³ καθαίρει. Cleanses, or clears, by pruning.

the contrary, yet he was sorely tried. And there is a reason; because "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."⁴ It strengthens the character, completes the qualities, and realises the graces of the Christian. Therefore, said St. Paul, "we joy in tribulation also;" we joy in it, not because in itself it is delightful, but because we know it is sent for a good end, that we may bear more fruit, and receive a greater reward. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

How great the comfort, when we can thus regard our present life! Altogether as a state of preparation, in which our Father, as a husbandman, places us, and watches and tends our progress, whether towards good or evil. How precious in his eyes must that plant be, which he cultivates with so much care! What great things must be ¹ set up for those who answer the culture which he bestows on them! And what a blessing, to be assured that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose,"⁵ first to be grafted upon Christ, the true vine, and then to bear "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life!"⁶

This world, and our passage through it, wear a new aspect as soon as it is thus contemplated. Let us learn more and more to consider it in this

⁴ Rom. v. 3, 4.

⁵ Rom. viii. 28.

⁶ Rom. vi. 22.

view. Such faith will render blessings doubly blessed, because it will sanctify them. Such faith will render afflictions not only tolerable, but easy. We shall be able to say, It is my Father's hand. "Let him do what seemeth him good:" "herein is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit:" and he is enabling me to bear more fruit. Nay, he is rewarding the little fruit of holiness which I have yet rendered him, by giving me more means and opportunities of serving him, and conforming to his will.

While we encourage thoughts like these, we shall derive fresh sufficiency from him, to whose body we belong. The strength of a branch is not derived from itself, but from the virtue of the parent stem. And so the Christian, weak in himself, is strong in the strength of Christ; he can do all things, bear all things, hope all things, suffer all things, "through Christ who strengtheneth him."

LECTURE LXXIV.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST REPRESENTED AS
BRANCHES OF THE VINE.

JOHN XV. 3—8.

3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

Our Lord here pursues the exam¹ which he had begun, when he described himself as the vine, and his disciples as the branches of the vine. He had shown how the husbandman *purgeth* the promising branch; clears it from what might impair its fruitfulness. *Ye*, he proceeds to say, are already *clean*,"¹ "purged from your old sins," *through the word which I have spoken to you.* And now what remains is this; that ye *abide in me, and I in you.* On this all depends. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

¹ The words *purgeth* and *clean* are similar in the original.

Here he speaks of the apostles as being already branches of the true vine. Let us consider how they had become so.

The branches of a tree are connected with it, and belong to it in two ways. Either they spring naturally from it, and grow out of it; or they are grafted into a stem to which they had not before belonged. The apostles did not naturally belong to the stock of Christ: for he is of God, and they were of the race of Adam. It is the same with all Christians. None are made branches of the true vine by birth or origin. We are expressly assured, that they who do become such, “are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” They are taken from their wild stock, the stock of Adam, and grafted upon the true vine, the tree of life, the tree of fruitfulness. The Father, who *is the husbandman*, by his Spirit takes the soul from the stock to which it belonged by nature, a corrupt tree which cannot bring forth good fruit; and grafts it upon the stock of Christ, which gives it another and a better nature, and enables it to bear the fruit of righteousness and holiness. So in the case of Peter, when he replied to the question of his Lord, “Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.”² It is distinctly affirmed, that “flesh and blood had not revealed this to him, but the Father which is in heaven.” And so, (Acts xvi. 14,) when a certain woman, named Lydia, believed, and was baptized into the faith of Christ;

² Matt. xvi. 16, 17.

we are also assured, that the Lord opened her heart, “that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”

These instances may also instruct us as to the manner of the union. When a scion is united to a tree, means must be used to connect the one with the other. And so in this spiritual husbandry. That which is used by the Spirit of God, that which is needful to unite the man with Christ, is faith. Baptism is the outward form by which the union is signified and shown: and faith is the inward principle of adherence. It was faith which the apostle Philip required of the Ethiopian, whom he had instructed in the truths of the Gospel. When the stranger said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”³ Why may I not be grafted into the vine which thou hast been displaying to me? Philip replies: “If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” And he baptized him.

It is thus that faith acts, and connects the young and tender scion with the parent stem: acts in uniting the soul with Christ. The disciple believes within himself, or, in the case of infant baptism, the parent believes in his behalf, that it is good for him to be united with Christ Jesus. For the stock to which he belongs by birth, is a corrupted stock, condemned before God, producing evil fruit: and the end of such trees is to be burned: “every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down

³ Acts viii. 36.

and cast into the fire.” But the branches which are grafted into Christ, do not perish : they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit here on earth, and hereafter God removes them and transplants them into his heavenly kingdom. This the man believes : the apostles believed it : the Ethiopian believed it : and therefore they desired to be separated from their naturally bad and perishing stock, and to be engrafted as willing scions upon the stem of Christ, who is the true vine.

Let all remember, that the substance of these thoughts must pass through every mind, and form the ground of union with the Redeemer. “ In Adam all die,” and therefore all must clear and separate themselves from his race, or they too must die. But “ there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” “ Whoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die.” Every soul, therefore, must be a branch grafted into him, that it may live and flourish for ever in his vineyard. Such is the faith which must be active in the heart, and make it adhere closely to the stem, and manifest both its union and its vigour by the goodness and abundance of the fruit it bears.

For we learn from what follows, first, that all fruitfulness depends on this adherence ; and next, that all proof of adherence must be sought from fruitfulness.

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

The intention of the husbandman, who grafts a new scion upon a stem, is, that it should bear fruit. The intention of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world is the same. He sent him to bless men, in turning them away from their iniquities. His Spirit unites the soul to Christ, that it may be changed, and purified, and renewed. And the effect of that union is to supersede the original nature, the carnal mind, which is death, and to produce “a new heart, and a right spirit,” which shall exhibit the fruits of temperance, and goodness, and meekness, and brotherly kindness, and godliness, and purity. *Herein is the Father glorified.* For this purpose were they grafted in, that they might bear these fruits. *So are they Christ’s disciples.* But if they *bear them not*, they *abide not in him*. The proof of the branch belonging to the tree, is its bearing fruit of the same nature as the tree. “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” The qualities of the parent stem must be the qualities of the branch too. Can a heart be grafted on the stock of Christ, who himself so loved the world, that he laid down his life to redeem it; and that heart bear no brotherly kindness, no charity? Can a heart be grafted on the stock of Christ, who set such an example of long-suffering, of gentleness, of meekness, and yet bear no fruit of a like kind? Is it not patient under injuries, nor gentle, nor meek, nor lowly? Can a heart be grafted into the stock of Christ, whose

whole life was one course of self-denial, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, who “had not where to lay his head ;” and has that heart no self-command, no moderation ? Is it not temperate in all things ? Can it be earthly and sensual ?

No further proof is needed, that a man *abides not in Christ*. The faith that seemed to make an union between them, has no firmness, no consistency : it has given way : the stem does not nourish it : and, says the Lord, *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

But great indeed is the promise to those who “hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end.”⁴ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* There is nothing which is expedient for them which shall not be granted. No sorrow shall be without its alleviation. No care without its comfort. No evil passion shall retain dominion. No self-will shall be stronger than the will of God. “For it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”⁵ They shall be enabled to do “all things :”⁶ yet not they, “but the grace of God that is with them.”⁷ “All things are theirs. For they are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.”⁸

⁴ Heb. iii. 14.⁵ Phil. ii. 13.⁶ Phil. iv. 13.⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 10.⁸ 1 Cor. iii. 23.

LECTURE LXXV.

DISCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES CONTINUED.

JOHN xv. 9—16.

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : continue ye in my love.*

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love : even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

12. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Our blessed Lord here places in the strongest light the love which he bore towards his disciples ; for he compares it with the love which the Father bore towards himself. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.* The principle of union is the same in both cases ; one does the will of the other. The Son *keeps the Father's commandments, and abides in his love.* The disciples are to keep their Lord's commandments, and they shall *continue in his love.* For love, properly considered, is

not an abstract principle, but a principle of action. We should try our love to God, by bringing it to the same rule as love to man. If we love a fellow creature, that love produces an instinctive desire of complying with his wishes, of gratifying, pleasing, obeying him. And if there is a real love of Christ in the heart, it will have the same effect. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is at once the most simple and the most reasonable test on which a judgment can be formed, and the state of the heart decided.

More especially when we proceed to the commandment itself, and consider its justness. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* What an example of genuine, intense, disinterested love is set us in the gospel! *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* But St. Paul reminds us, and let it never be forgotten, how much even this unusual love is exceeded by the love of Christ. (Rom. v. 7.) "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Died for us whilst enemies, that we might be entitled to be called his friends. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

And here the Lord graciously takes up the term *friends*, as if pleased with it; and rejoices in the opportunity of testifying the confidence which he reposed in them.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth : but I have called you friends : for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you : and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain : that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

We look back to the calling of the apostles, the fact here stated appears very clear : *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* Peter and Andrew were engaged in their vocation, and casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.¹ "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." So likewise James and John ; these also he called : and "they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." So that in every sense it must be allowed that they *had not chosen him*. His call that they should follow him, must have been accompanied by an irresistible influence upon their hearts, which would lead them to love him more than the things of this world in which they had been heretofore engaged, and to seek first the kingdom of God. He had "chosen them out of the world."

This calling of the apostles was peculiar. Ordinary Christians are not in the same evident manner *chosen* out of the world, and *ordained* to the

¹ These had before acknowledged Jesus, on the information of John the Baptist. (See John i. 35-42.) But an interval had elapsed, before they were called to be apostles. Compare Matt. iv. 12-25.

purposes which God designs them to serve. But every one who “has the witness in himself” that he is Christ’s disciple, will be forward to confess that he has nothing “which he has not received;” that “by the grace of God” he is what he is: that such grace alone has made him to differ from others who show no evidence of the same faith in the habits of their lives. He is “born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”²

In one point of view, however, it might be said of the apostles, that they *had chosen Christ*. They had left all and followed him. They had said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

And in the same manner, every one who has the hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus, must in this sense have chosen him to be theirs. It is the proof that he chooses them to be his. They must have perceived his offers and his promises to be exactly what their wants require: must have come to him by the movement of their own hearts: must have adhered to him, and *continued in his love*.

And so likewise, as he ordained the apostles *to go and bring forth fruit*, he ordains all to whom he “gives power to become the sons of God,” to live as God’s children, and to fulfil the work appointed them, for the benefit of man and the glory of their heavenly Father. So that their being *chosen*, their “election of God,”³ is not a thing con-

² See the Articles of our Church. x. and xvii.

³ 1 Thess. i. 4.

fined to his secret counsels, but has an outward evidence in the life of those who are thus redeemed as “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Looking, therefore, at these words, and practically applying them, this is the conclusion.

When you “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, and prove your own selves,” you ought to be able to say, that Christ has chosen you. For “he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”⁴

But the heart may be sad, and afraid to credit this: or the heart may be sanguine, and too ready to be persuaded of it: so that the heart must not be alone trusted, either on one side or the other. Does the conduct of your lives give collateral evidence that he hath chosen you, because you have chosen him, and “counted all other things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord?”⁵ Are you bringing forth fruit; and engaged in those “good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them?”⁶

This is the evidence, which may “make your calling and election sure,” *that your joy may be full*: this the proof that the Lord has *chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*. And “so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁷

⁴ 1 John v. 10.

⁵ Phil. iii. 8.

⁶ Eph. ii. 10.

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

LECTURE LXXVI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES CONTINUED.

JOHN XV. 17—27.

17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

19. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

20. *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

21. *But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

Our Lord had frequently prepared his disciples for enmity and persecution. And here he shows what is the ground of such enmity. He had *chosen them out of the world*: by their preaching and by their practice they would condemn the world: *therefore would the world hate them*. Their example, if presented to kindred hearts, would excite to godly emulation: but proposed to those who were alienated from God and devoted to this present world, it would provoke malice and jealousy,

So it has always been. Abel might have kept his sheep in safety, if he had not “offered up to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”¹ Joseph would have been in no danger from his brethren, if he had consented to partake in their evil deeds.² Micaiah would not have incurred Ahab’s enmity, if like his brother prophets he had concealed the truth, and prophesied “peace, when there was no peace,” to that wicked king.³

An example of righteousness in the midst of unrighteousness, as of Lot among the inhabitants of Sodom, stirs up the pride of the human heart, and leads on to malice and hatred. We see its working in the complaint of the Pharisees against our Lord: “Master, so saying, thou condemnest us also.” On the same principle, men argue with themselves—if such and such practices of piety and habits of self-denial proceed from a knowledge of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” and we do not pursue such practices,—we do not rightly hold the knowledge of the truth. So to act is to condemn us also. Thus the heart reasons with itself: and this is the secret spring of that jealousy which exists against a stricter life, and a more careful course, than the generality of a christian community approve or follow. It is a very favourable sign when that jealousy is not felt, or not indulged. We find honourable mention made of the Bereans, (Acts xvii. 11,) compared with the people of Thessalonica; for the Bereans, instead of violently opposing the new doctrine preached to them by the

¹ Heb. xi. 4.² Gen. xxxvii. 2.³ 1 Kings xxii. 8—28.

apostles, “searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” And “therefore,” we are told, “many of them believed.” Their “honest and good heart” was favoured, and enlightened more and more.

The sin of the Jewish nation was, that they showed a very different spirit. They loved darkness for the sake of darkness. It better suited their habits of iniquity. And this was the great aggravation of their sinfulness. So that Jesus adds ;

22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me :

27. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The apostles might naturally have been discouraged by the tenour of their Lord's discourse. These last words would cheer and refresh them, by promising a time when all should not dishonour him, and there should be some better return of his labour and theirs, than contempt and hatred. *When the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me.*

It was a supernatural work to change the heart, and bring it to love light rather than darkness. The time for this had not yet arrived. As Isaiah had said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart: that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."⁴ But it should not continue so always. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

The Holy Ghost testified of Jesus as the Messiah, when he confirmed the words of the apostles by "signs following;" as in that first miracle, when at the command of Peter the cripple at the gate of the temple "received strength, and stood, and walked."⁵ But our Lord here alludes to that further testimony which the Spirit should bear within, carrying the truth to the heart, and convincing "the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." If the testimony of miracles were enough, testimony more than sufficient had been borne already. "The blind had received their sight, the lame had been made to walk, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised."⁶ But as the seal is useless, unless the wax is ready to receive the impression; so was it whilst the word, and the evidence which proved the word to be of God, fell upon stony hearts, which the Spirit had not softened. This was not always to continue so. A better promise had been given, and was now to be

⁴ See xii. 40.⁵ Acts iii. 2—8.⁶ See Matt. xi. 5.

accomplished. (Heb. viii. 10—12.) “ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts : and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people : For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Learn from this, on what the conversion of the heart depends. Naturally, it is averse from God : not indeed averse from him as a provident and beneficent Creator, but as a moral governor : averse from the holiness which he requires. What did the Jews behold in Jesus but purity, mercy, righteousness, godliness ? And in this they saw what God is in his whole nature, and what man must be, if reconciled to him : and therefore they hated him : as he says, *Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* It is a grievous thought, but confirmed by everything which we see and know of the world. But *when the Comforter, whom Christ sends from the Father, comes into the heart, he testifies of him* with a force and power which penetrates within. God is no longer the object of enmity and dread, but of love and devotion : and the heart's desire is not to be separated from him, not to be alienated from him through sin, but to be renewed more and more after his image in righteousness and true holiness. And the constant prayer is ; “ When wilt thou come unto me ? O leave me not, neither forsake me : I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.”

LECTURE LXXVII.

THE APOSTLES ARE TAUGHT TO EXPECT OPPOSITION, AND THE AID OF THE COMFORTER IS PROMISED THEM.

JOHN xvi. 1—11.

1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

3. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

5. *But now I go my way to him that sent me : and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ?*

6. *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

The apostles had much reason for sorrow, and the prophecy here uttered was not of a nature to console them, as far as they looked towards the present world. *The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* As was realised in the instance of St. Paul, who declares, " I verily thought within myself, that I ought to

do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth :”¹ and God, he says, had compassion on him, “ because he did it ignorantly.”²

Yet if Saul and others, who thought, as he did, that in “ persecuting that way unto death,” *they were doing God service* : had these *known the Father*,—understood his real character, or been acquainted with his will, they would not have done these things. And all should be instructed by such an example to distrust their own judgment, to watch vigilantly and pray earnestly, “ lest haply they be found to fight against God.”

What then would be the remedy against the sorrow of the apostles ? When Jesus here declares,—*Now I go my way to him that sent me* ; had they ventured to ask, *Whither goest thou ?* the reply would have been their comfort. They would learn that their Master, having ascended up to heaven, could give them stronger support and surer consolation than they had received from him whilst dwelling with them in the world.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth : It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

8. *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment :*

9. *Of sin, because they believe not on me ;*

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ;*

¹ Acts xxvi. 9.

² 1 Tim. i. 13.

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

The nature of that comfort is here declared, which was intended for the disciples of Christ. It was the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which should be enjoyed by them in a far greater measure than had ever been before experienced by the people of God. The prophecy in the Psalms had said concerning Christ, "When he ascended up on high, he received gifts for men."³ And so it would be fulfilled: the king would sit down upon his throne, and then enrich his subjects with his bounty. The presence of the Comforter in their heart would compensate them for the loss of their Master's presence in the flesh. And the "mouth and wisdom" which he would give them, should have power to turn many to righteousness: would effect that, which without him⁴ might be attempted in vain.

Let the event explain this.

The Jewish nation had refused to believe in Jesus as the Messiah: had denied that he came from the Father, or would return to the Father: had joined in the work of Satan, *the prince of this world*, and shed his innocent blood.

Fifty days afterwards the promise here made was fulfilled. The fit occasion having arrived, the day of Pentecost, Jesus *sent the Comforter* unto the

³ Ps. lxxviii. 18.

⁴ The personal pronoun is used, *ἐκεῖνος*. *He* will reprove.

apostles. They, “being filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance.”⁵ And Peter undertook to *reprove* the men of Israel. To reprove them *of sin, because they believed not on Jesus*. “Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” To reprove them *of righteousness*, because he had ascended to the Father, and so his righteousness had been manifested. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” To reprove them *of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*. “God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Thus Satan was condemned; his reign broken, his power weakened: and the Lord should sit on the right hand of God, “till he had made his foes his footstool.”

Such were the arguments which Peter used. The proofs by which he enforced them, the gift of various languages, were convincing. But not a stronger evidence than Christ had continually given, when the dumb were enabled to speak, and the deaf to hear, and the lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised. Yet when Jesus did these things, the Jews “took counsel to slay him; and “desired the more to kill him, because he had raised Lazarus from the dead.” Now, however, when they heard the words of Peter, “they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and unto the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we

⁵ Acts ii. 4—36.

do?" How shall we save ourselves from the heinousness of this sin?

The apostles, therefore, had now a power present with them, and accompanying their words, which before was not exerted. The Comforter had come unto them, and was *reproving the world* by their mouths; was carrying conviction home. The assembly, their "hearts being opened," the "eyes of their understanding being enlightened," gladly received the words of Peter; "and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

The work performed on the minds of the Jewish assembly must be performed on the minds of all. That Christ died for sin; that being raised from the dead, he ascended into heaven; that he delivers from the power of darkness all who trust in him: this is the sum of christian faith. But this can no more be received now, than when Peter affirmed it to his countrymen, except through the influence of the same Spirit, proceeding as then from the Father and the Son. We declare the truth, as the husbandman casts the seeds into the furrow. And the truth remains unheeded and inoperative, unless the Spirit moves upon the heart; just as the seed lies unchanged within the ground, if there is no warmth or moisture from above to bring it into life. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon

God.”⁶ The Spirit, however, has continued to accompany the word spoken, and to *reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*. Many, like those who listened to the words of Peter, have “saved themselves from the untoward generation” of which they formed a part; and “walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,” have manifested the power which wrought effectually within them.

It is “the same Spirit which worketh all in all.” And we must entreat of him, both for ourselves and others, that he may give us a right judgment in all things : may enable us to perceive the guilt of our own nature, and to understand “the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ :” that being rooted and built up on that foundation, the blessed gifts of the Spirit may be ours, and we may learn by happy experience that “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”⁷

⁶ Art. x.

⁷ Rom. xiv. 17.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PROMISED TO EXPLAIN
THE THINGS WHICH THE APOSTLES WERE
UNABLE TO COMPREHEND.

JOHN xvi. 12—15.

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

13. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come.*

There were many things relating to the Gospel which it would be needful for the apostles to know, both for their own faith, and that of others. But as yet they *could not bear them*.

Even that great fact which is the basis of all, that the Son of God had come “to give his life a ransom for many;” even that was at present in no wise understood by them. A veil was on their hearts when Isaiah was read, which yet remained untaken away, just “as, when Moses was read, a veil was on the hearts”¹ of all the Jews. “He was bruised for our iniquities.” “For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” “Mes-

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 15.

siah shall be cut off, though not for himself.”² So the prophets had spoken: but light was not yet cast upon these passages, neither was it the divine will that they should be fully understood, till the sacrifice had been already offered, and the atonement completed. Then the Spirit teaching them, they would perceivethat he, in whom they trusted that he “should redeem Israel,” did redeem them by that very death which seemed ruin to their hopes. Then the Spirit should *guide them into all truth*, all the truth³ relating to the salvation of man.

To do this was the part of the Spirit in this great work. He did not act independently and alone: *he shall not speak of himself*. Neither did Christ act independently: He had told them in this same discourse, that all things which he had heard of the Father, he had made known to them: ⁴ that the word which they had heard from him, was not his, but the Father’s which sent him. So now he adds concerning the Spirit: *whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*. The whole “three persons together” were united in the same object, and each had his separate office, in conferring upon man a blessing, which too often man despises as if it were beneath his care: nay, never values as he ought, until the same Spirit enlightens him who was to enlighten the apostles. But he, as Jesus proceeds to say,

14. *He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

² Is. liii. 5—8. Dan. ix. 26.

³ So the original. *πασαν την ἀληθειαν*. ⁴ John xv. 15.

15. *All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.*

Jesus is glorified by the Spirit, because the Spirit teaches men to glorify him. He first teaches the ministers of Christ, as he taught the apostles, to point to the cross of Christ as the means of man's reconciliation with God. And then he teaches those to glorify the Redeemer, who are saved from wrath through him.

It was through the teaching of the Spirit that Peter was enabled to reply to his conscience-stricken countrymen, that the blood which they had shed, might atone for their sin in shedding it.⁵ And thus Christ was glorified. And when three thousand persons gladly received his word, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; it was the work of the Spirit upon their hearts which led them as convicted sinners to the "fountain opened for sin," and enabled them to see that they might wash in that and be clean. It was an accomplishment of the words, *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

When St. Paul explained to the people among whom he ministered "the unsearchable riches of Christ," he spoke through the teaching of the Holy Ghost. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."⁶ Left to himself, he would have persuaded his countrymen to seek "the

⁵ See Acts ii. 38, &c.

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

righteousness which is of the law," on which he had been used to place his own reliance. Left to himself, he would have retained the prejudices of his brethren, and have thought it impossible that "God should grant unto the Gentiles also repentance unto life." But the Spirit *received of Christ, and shewed unto him* the truth: how "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," had "raised up together" both Jews and Gentiles, and "made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."⁷

It is only through the influence of the same Spirit that Christ is now glorified in the salvation of man. It is possible to hear, for years, of the death of Christ: to believe in all the facts of his history: to feel no doubt of the articles of the christian faith: and yet not to apply these truths to our own case, in such a manner as either to be comforted or sanctified. The Spirit must *take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us*: must make us know "in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep what we have committed to him unto the great day." He must make us understand the efficacy of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," that we may be led to sprinkle it upon our own hearts by faith. He must teach us the personal interest which we have in Christ, as "an advocate with the Father," who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." He must teach us to rely on that grace which is "made perfect in weakness." It is not of himself that the Christian "can

⁷ Eph. ii. 4—6.

rejoice, as though he rejoiced not; or weep, as though he wept not; or buy, as though he possessed not; or use this world, as not abusing it.”⁸ Only the teaching which is from above, can enable him to say, “Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”⁹ It is not of himself that he can say, “Nay, we glory in tribulations also; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”¹

These *things of the Father* the Spirit *takes and shews* unto them that believe; and thus bestows that peace and consolation, which the gospel uniformly promises as the effect of faith. For “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Do we desire more of this? The water of life must be sought from the fountain of life: and if we need larger supplies, we must drink deeper of the spring. The treasures of grace must be received from him in whom all riches are laid up and all fulness dwells. And to dispense these, is the Spirit’s office: for Jesus has expressly declared, *he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.*

⁸ 1 Cor. vii. 30.⁹ 2 Cor. xii. 10.¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

LECTURE LXXIX.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS APPROACHING REMOVAL
TO THE APOSTLES.

JOHN xvi. 16—27.

16. *A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

17. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me ; and, Because I go to the Father ?*

18. *They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while ? we cannot tell what he saith.*

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me ?*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

21. *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

22. *And ye now therefore have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

St. John has himself told us in his own simple language how these words were fulfilled a few days after

they had been spoken.¹ “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” Meanwhile they would *weep and lament*, as well they might, at the indignities which he should suffer. It would seem as if all their hopes were at an end: whilst *the world*, the enemies of Christ, rejoiced as if they had gained a victory. But after a short though heavy storm, the sun would again break forth, and the joy be proportioned to the sorrow. They would not only see him, but see his glory, his greatness: it would be joy such as no man could take away from them: the joy of knowing that they had not followed a shadow, or given up this present world for nothing; but that one was gone before “to prepare a place for them,” and meanwhile to support them in their duties; “to establish, strengthen, settle them.”

There is much in this which is applicable to all Christians. They are often called to weep and lament while the world rejoices: they weep over their manifold infirmities, their “secret faults,” and their “presumptuous sins:” they weep over the careless lives of the multitude, who go along the broad road which leadeth to destruction. They are serious in their deportment, and in their habits self-denying, whilst they are “working out their salvation with fear and trembling.” Meanwhile the world rejoices; drowns thought in senseless mirth; and lays up no good foundation against the time to come. But still the Christian has even now a *joy which no man taketh from him*: a joy in knowing whose he is, and whom he serves.

And he whom he serves, and he whose he is, does not leave him comfortless: *sees him again*, here by the refreshing presence of the Spirit, and will see him again hereafter, when he comes in clouds and great glory, to receive his faithful followers into the joy of their Lord. Whatever labour he may have undergone, or sorrow he may have endured on earth, he will then *remember no more*; it will be *turned into joy*.

Looking onward now to his approaching ascension into heaven, Jesus proceeds to say;

23. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.² Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

24. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

25. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.*

26. *At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:*

27. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.*

² ἐρωτῶτε. Shall have no need to ask such questions as they had been lately asking, and were anxious to inquire about still further: as, whither he was going; what he meant in saying, "A little while, and ye shall see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall not see me." All things which they might desire or need to know, should be revealed to them.

And then follows a further promise:—all things which they might desire or need to have, should be granted them. Whatsoever ye shall ask (αἰτῶσθε) the Father in my name, he will give it you.

Jesus had not yet become the Intercessor who is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, to be our "Advocate with the Father." Neither had the disciples yet clearly understood, that the way of access to the Father is by the Son: for all things had been delivered unto him by the Father. Therefore hitherto they had asked nothing in his name. All would soon be plainly revealed: no longer *spoken in proverbs*: and they would be taught the privilege which should belong to them as children: how they might say, "Abba, Father," having "received the Spirit of adoption."³ Still more boldly might they come to the throne of grace, knowing that he, their Lord and Master, was "ever living there to make intercession for them." And yet, it appears, he need not plead: so graciously is the love of God declared; *I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

Two things are here declared, and both of the highest interest. First, the love of God towards Christ's disciples. *The Father himself loveth you.* The mercy of God is over all his works: he sendeth his rain both upon the just and upon the unjust: as an earthly parent bears a natural affection towards all his children. But the child of an earthly parent may conduct himself so perversely and disobediently, as to forfeit the parent's favour: and according to the same example we uniformly learn

³ See Rom. viii. 15.

from Scripture, that the objects of God's peculiar love are those who do his will. Those who neglect his will, who disobey his precepts, who despise his goodness, he may regard with pity, but he cannot regard with complacency. It is a decided proof of their enmity against him, that they refuse to believe on him whom he hath sent, *who came out from God.*

Further we learn here the reason of the love of God towards Christ's disciples. It is because of their love towards the Son. *The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

He is pleased with their crediting his word, and trusting him for what he promises, and "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the pleasures of sin for a season." They have separated themselves from those who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." And they shall not "lose the things which they have wrought, but receive a full reward." ⁴

All therefore whose conscience bears them witness that they believe in him whom God hath sent, and whose lives bear witness to their faith, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; all such may take to themselves this comfort;—*The Father himself loveth you.* They are safe under his buckler; and under the shadow of his wings shall be their refuge, until the enmity of Satan be overpast, and they have entered into that rest, that

rest from trial and sin and sorrow, which maineth for the people of God.”

LECTURE LXXX.

JESUS CONCLUDES HIS DISCOURSE BY A PROMISE TO THE DISCIPLES OF PEACE WITHIN.

JOHN xvi. 28—33.

28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

29. *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.*

30. *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*

31. *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe ?*

32. *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

The apostles believed that Jesus came forth from God. But it is one thing to believe this, and have no doubt of it in the mind ; and another thing so to act upon the belief, as to risk all, resign all, suffer all, in reliance upon that truth.

Such faith is not commonly fixed by a first and sudden impression ; it is more usually the result of a continued influence of the Spirit upon the heart, bringing into captivity the reason, the understanding, the affections. Jesus well knew that the minds of the apostles were not yet in a state to say, with the confidence of Paul afterwards, (Acts xx. 24,) “ None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I may finish my course with joy.” In a few hours they should *be scattered every man to his own*, every one to seek his own safety, and *leave him alone ; and yet*, he adds, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

Thus did he take to himself, as man, that consolation which he has taught his followers to rejoice in. *He was not alone.* And in the trials to which they are called, they too are not alone, because the Father is with them. And as, without his presence in the soul, earthly blessings have no abiding good ; so can his presence make ample compensation for the absence of all that this world can bestow. Such is the truth expressed in the next sentence, the last which the Lord addressed to his disciples before his resurrection.

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.*

This might seem a hard saying, *In the world ye shall have tribulation.* Ye shall be carried before princes and governors, and they shall revile, and

persecute, and imprison, and torment you :—*but be of good cheer* : maintain your spirits and your courage through all these trials : *I have overcome the world.*

Were they enabled to fulfil this ?

We are informed, (Acts v. 40,) that when the high priest, and the Sadducees, and other enemies of the truth, had brought the apostles before the council, “ and beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. And they departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

We are again told, (Acts xvi. 22,) that “ the multitude rose up against them : and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely : who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas *prayed, and sang praises* unto God : and the prisoners heard them.”

Here, then, we find the apostles, in their own persons, leaving us an example and a proof, that he who issued the exhortation, *Be of good cheer*, could also give the heart to act according to it. We find them placed in circumstances which could not be otherwise than painful to flesh and blood, yet able to rejoice in heart, and rise above their outward trials.

And the principle on which they did this was a settled, defined principle, as contained in the words of Jesus, *I have overcome the world*. He had set a prospect before them, brighter than the hopes and prospects of this present world, and strong enough to cast its trials and sorrows into shade: so that they were able to glory in tribulation also; “to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;” knowing that their “light affliction, which is but for a moment, was working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

But as it is not confined to apostles, in this world, to *have tribulation*; so neither is it confined to them to *be of good cheer* and *have peace* in tribulation. The Christian is not exempted from worldly difficulties. It happens to him, as to others, to meet with what are termed misfortunes: to be deprived of the friends which make life dear to him; to be depressed by poverty, to be afflicted by sickness, to suffer under pain. It is not by setting him free from the common lot of human nature, from the punishment which followed the great transgression: it is not thus that God makes manifest his favour towards him. But he makes it manifest in another way: by cheering him in his poverty, by supporting him in his sickness, by comforting him in his afflictions. As after the deluge he made a covenant with Noah, and set his bow in the sky, for a token, that though there might be clouds and storms, yet there should be a limit to them, and

the waters should no more utterly overwhelm the earth : so he treats his servants in their griefs ; he shows them the token of his covenant : the sunshine of his mercy breaks through the clouds which overhang them, and they are enabled to say, “ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.” Then most especially is the promise fulfilled :—“ If any man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Many have experienced the truth of this ; and have avowed, that the time of their heaviest earthly sorrow has been the season of their greatest spiritual comfort. God has so visited and refreshed them, so lightened the darkness of their affliction, so smoothed the pillow of their sickness, that they have forgotten their griefs, and found in his presence the fulness of joy. They have that in themselves which raises them above this world, with all its changes, and reverses, and fears, and sorrows :—even their faith. *In the world they may have tribulation : but still they are of good cheer : for he in whom they believe, has overcome the world.*

LECTURE LXXXI.

THE LAST PRAYER OF CHRIST TO THE FATHER.

JOHN xvii. 1—3.

1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee :*

2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The sublime prayer recorded in this chapter is of a nature to show the greatness of that work, which too many pass over with cold indifference, and which none will ever adequately value on this side the grave.

That work was to be achieved upon the cross, where Jesus should now suffer, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Here the Son would be glorified, as performing the Father’s will, as receiving the Father’s testimony, as effecting the redemption of the world. And here the Father would be glorified, by this wonderful exhibition of his holiness and his mercy. *Father, glorify thy Son !* Consummate through him the salvation of a perishing world. *That thy Son also*

may glorify thee, by showing to sinful man that “thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:”¹ and that thou so lovedst the world as to give thine only Son, “that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Such is “the mystery of godliness:” thus was the Son of man glorified, and thus God is glorified in him. For God had *given him power over all flesh*—all mankind—that *he should give eternal life to as many as God had given him.*

To as many as God had given him. So those are described, who shall enjoy the benefits of redemption. For as “no man can come to Christ, except it be given him of the Father,”² except “the Father draw him;” those who are so drawn towards him, so permitted to come to him, are given him of God. He had formerly declared, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” The faith by which they apply to him, is the gift of God to themselves: and the salvation which is the result of their faith, is the gift of God to his Son; “the joy that was set before him,” and for which he “despised the shame:” the satisfaction for “the travail of his soul.”

There is in this much of mystery, which, happily, we need not endeavour to penetrate. Enough is clearly revealed to assure us, that God “has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth:”³ that he will have all men to be saved, and come to the

¹ Hab. i. 13.

² See John vi. 65, and 44.

³ Ezek. xviii. 32.

knowledge of the truth.”⁴ He will not “break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” When the sinner is “yet afar off,” he sees him, and invites him to be a partaker of his mercy. “Whoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.” And he has not left us in uncertainty, as to what eternal life depends on, or to whom it belongs. Even if they stood alone, we might learn it from these the latest words of Jesus: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

That they might *know thee*. Such was the purpose of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that he might “bring us to God.” Naturally we know him not. Left to nature, we should never know him as he ought to be known. For the real knowledge of God, is not merely such a knowledge as was attained by some of the heathen, as of the Being who framed the world; but an acquaintance with him as Lord, as Governor, as Judge: such acquaintance as the patriarch Jacob had, when he entered into covenant to serve him: as the patriarch Joseph had, when he refused to disobey him: as the aged Eli had, when he submitted to his will: as King David had, when he set himself to consider how best he could do him honour. This knowledge men have not naturally. Nay, under every advantage, they are unwilling to acquire it. How far is it from being the natural disposition of the young to seek after God! How few come readily and willingly

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

to their minister or their teacher, that they may learn "the wonders of his law," and neither forget him through ignorance, nor offend him through self-will! And as age advances, the case is commonly still worse; evil habits then remove the man still further from God than the carelessness of the child.

There is nothing in this, that can lead to *life eternal*. Those surely must have the knowledge of God, who are to dwell with him through eternity.

Therefore, to give them this knowledge, "God was manifest in the flesh." *Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, brings them to know the true God: to "the knowledge of him who hath called them to glory and virtue."⁵ And not only to the knowledge of him in the greatness of his glorious majesty, but in the exercise of his wonderful mercy.

- To know him only as "the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," would be a knowledge full of fear and despair, rather than of joy or comfort. But to know him, as we do know him through Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is a knowledge that gives life. It is to know him, as the God who "dwelleth with them that are poor and of a contrite spirit:" who "forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and because he can in no wise "clear the guilty," has "found a ransom" which man could never find, and now "commandeth all men everywhere to repent," and "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And thus to *know the*

⁵ 2 Pet. i. 3.

only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is eternal life. Such knowledge is as a seed planted in the heart, which springs up unto everlasting life. It leads to the love of God, who has first loved us: it leads to obedience to his will, which has been so firmly sanctioned: it leads to an union with him, an habitual dependence upon him. And all these are the beginnings here, of that eternal kingdom which is revealed to us. Perfect knowledge, perfect love, perfect union, perfect conformity between the everlasting God and his reasonable creatures, is the clearest idea which we can form of heaven, where we are told that “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be, and that his servants shall serve him, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”⁶

Now, then, we must acquire the elements of that knowledge which is to be completed hereafter in “the spirits of just men made perfect.” And to possess it, is the proof for which we must search in ourselves, as evidence of having been *given to Christ*.

To *know* God with a real and spiritual knowledge, is so to know his justice, as to feel that it condemns us; so to know his mercy, as to seek it for ourselves; so to know his power, as to fear offending him; so to know his holiness, as to aspire towards it, and make it the object of our imitation. And the real knowledge of Jesus Christ, is to see in him the “one mediator between God and man; between the justice of God, and the rebellious ini-

⁶ Rev. xxii. 3—5.

JOHN XVII. 4—10.

quity of his creatures: to know him as the Redeemer, who having so loved us, has a title to our love; as the Lord, who having bought us with a price, has a right to our service and allegiance. Such was the knowledge which St. Paul expresses, when he says, "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him." And such was the knowledge which those had of whom St. Peter speaks: "Christ Jesus, whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom, though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable."

This is life eternal. And ever remember the important truth which is here implied: Without this is NOT life eternal.

LECTURE LXXXII.

THE LAST PRAYER OF CHRIST TO THE FATHER.
HE INTERCEDES FOR THE APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 4—10.

4. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

5. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

The opening chapter of this Gospel reveals to us that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” From this glory he descended, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” that he might fulfil the will of God. That will had been performed; the work of redemption done. And now, as he was returning to *the glory which he had with the Father before the world was*, he looks back upon his finished work with a satisfaction which he alone, of all who have ever borne the form of man, could justly claim. *I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

One part of that work was to select and prepare a company of men, who should carry on God’s gracious purpose, and announce the “gospel of peace.” These are the principal subjects of that communion of the Son with the Father, which is here disclosed for our admiration and instruction.

6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

Out of the world at large, and out of the general inhabitants of Judea, a certain number had been chosen, and *given* to the Lord Jesus as his apostles, that they might attend him during his ministry, and afterwards “be witnesses unto him both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” These were God’s. All souls are his: “we are all his offspring;” in him we live, and move, and have our being.” He

had given them to Jesus: who now says, *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.* When we read the account of the calling of the several apostles; how, at a word, they “left all and followed him;” we cannot avoid seeing that they were in an especial manner *given* to our Lord. The preparation of all hearts is from above, and whoever at any time becomes a follower of Christ, is drawn to become so by the Spirit of God. But independently of ordinary means, independently of the usual operations of divine grace, these had a more evident and immediate call.

Thus far their case was peculiar, but no farther: for what the Lord proceeds to say concerning them, belongs to every one who believes in Christ through their word.

7. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

9. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*

10. *And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*

Here our Lord, in mercy to our weakness and natural fears, has left us an example of that “intercession,” which, says St. Paul, “he ever liveth to make” for his people. The high priest, under the Jewish law, was appointed to make such intercession: and Christ Jesus, whose office had been

prefigured by the high priest among the Jews, here pleads with God for the completion of the blessings which had been covenanted for those who believe in him, and for which his death upon the cross was now so soon to pay the purchase.

And he has carefully pointed out to us, who those are for whom he specially intercedes:—those whom God has given him. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, the unbelieving, unrepenting world: but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*

Here then a fearful, anxious soul might naturally say—Could I but feel that these words applied to myself, and to a case like mine, I should be happy. Could I but believe that God had separated me *out of the world, and given me to Christ*, I should be at ease.

The Lord, however, has not been inattentive to minds which might be thus perplexed, and has provided for them a sufficient comfort and assurance. At the same moment that he has limited his prayer to certain objects—*I pray for them*—He has also described the objects of his preference, and recorded the grounds of their high privilege. *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.* This is christian faith; and christian faith is the same, whether in an apostle, or in the humblest disciple. To receive his words, as the words of God, to receive his redemption, as provided of God for a lost and

sinful race, is to “receive him:” and to as many as receive him,—in whatever age they live, and to whatever duties they are called,—“to them gives he power to become the sons of God.” They are his; and his are God’s: and he is glorified in them.

Look then, not to the secret choice, or to the mysterious gift; but look to the signs and tokens: if these are with you, the rest follows. All who come to Christ, and receive the word of God from him, and keep it, are given him of the Father, and are the subjects of this prayer. They are the fruit of his travail, the recompense of his suffering. “For this is the will of him that sent him, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and he will raise him up at the last day.”¹

We must not suppose, however, that Christ has no concern for the world at large, because he confines this prayer to those who had received him, and says, *I pray for them; I pray not for the world.* We are assured by the apostle, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself:” we are assured by our Lord’s declaration, that he “came not to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved:” and before the conclusion of this very prayer he expresses a desire, that “the world may believe that he came forth from God.” But although he is “the Saviour of all men,” he is “especially” the Saviour “of those that believ..”² It is by receiving him,

¹ John vi. 40.

² 1 Tim. iv. 10.

by entering within his fold, and becoming part of his flock, and united with him in covenant; it is thus that men must secure his spiritual intercession. By that covenant they are one with him, and he with them: he takes them under his care; and as a part of that protection he prays the Father for them, that he may be glorified in their everlasting salvation. For these he pleads, as we have read; *I pray for them which thou hast given me.* They are not of the world; but they are those *whom thou gavest me out of the world.* They have not rejected my offer of mercy: they have not denied the authority in which I came; and therefore I pray for them, that they may “keep the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end,” and be “counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of the dead.”

Who would not desire to have a place in this prayer? What blessing can be so great, as to enjoy an interest in the intercession of the Son of God? To whom, then, is such blessing given? He invites every individual to the full enjoyment of it. “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” But let it be remembered, we must come unto him, that we may possess it. He *prays not for the world*, but for those who are separate from the world; who have left its service and withdrawn themselves from its dominion, that they may serve a better master, be safe under his protection, and be blessed by his reward.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST
FOR HIS APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 11—13.

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name : those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

13. *And now come I to thee : and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

We see here the care of a tender parent, who remembers the children whom he is leaving, and provides for their comfort and security when he is gone. The disciples were to continue in this world. The purposes of God required it. And being in the world, they would be exposed to the temptations connected with the world : subject to all the evils into which corrupt nature is liable to fall, according to the circumstances in which it is placed. And how many and various the snares to which the apostles would be exposed ! First, re-

proach and obloquy ; as Peter soon experienced, when questioned in the high priest's palace : " Art not thou also one of this man's disciples ?" " Did I not see thee in the garden with him ?" Then persecution and danger ; the being brought before kings and councils, and " straitly threatened, that they speak at all no more, nor teach in the name of Christ."¹ Great, therefore, was the danger from without, lest some of those chains with which the world lays hold upon the heart—the fear of man, the love of earthly things, or the attachment of relations and friends—should entangle them as they entangle others, and draw them back from the service of Christ and of God. But there was another danger within themselves ; the danger of pride, envy, emulation, strife, variance. Their peculiar vocation made the apostles more liable to these evils, than any other men : and they are evils into which other men in somewhat similar circumstances, but with far less temptation, fall too commonly. This seems to be the especial danger which their Lord had now in view : for his prayer is, *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.* That none may separate themselves from the chosen band, like Demas afterwards, " having loved this present world :"² and that there be no divisions amongst them, no jealousies, no heartburnings : but that *they may be one, as we are.* One in will, and one in action : one in interests, and one in counsels. Thus, *holy Father, keep through thine own*

¹ Acts iv. 17, 18.² 2 Tim. iv. 10.

namethose whomthou hastgiven me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. It must needs be that the Scripture be fulfilled, and that the Son of man should “go, as was written of him.” It must needs be that the Scripture be fulfilled, as to the manner of his being betrayed, that, as is prophesied in the Psalms, (Ps. xli. 9,) “mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, should lift up his heel against me:” that another should “take the office of Judas,” whose “days were few” and evil.² *The son of perdition* therefore is lost, “being before of old ordained unto this condemnation.”³ The rest *I have kept in thy name*: my doctrine has instructed them, my warnings have defended them, my example has encouraged them. But now *I come to thee*: and *these whom thou hast given me* must be left, like other men, to be encompassed with difficulties and dangers, and to be assaulted by the evil one. Still let them be left under a protection which all men have not—though all may find it and enjoy it, if they seek it with their whole heart:—*Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.*

Here the Lord has presented, to all his future disciples, a lively picture of their situation;—their dangers, and their security. It is evidently no slight or easy task which they have to perform, in

² See Ps. cix. 8; and Acts i. 20.

³ See Jude 4.

“working out their salvation;” in “making their calling and election sure.” They *are in the world*. He to whom they are given is *no more in the world*. The world endangers them: it is present, it is visible, it is tangible: they are daily concerned with it: and he is far above out of their sight: not manifestly at hand to protect, or instruct, or warn.

But their security is, that they have One above to care for them, to provide for them; and though Satan may “desire to have them, that he may sift them as wheat,” to pray for them, “that their faith fail not.”⁴

And he proves to us, by the intercession which is here recorded, how tenderly he is affected towards those who believe in him and commit themselves to him. He still retains the same heart, the same pity, the same compassionate nature, which dictated these words. He is not like what we might imagine in a perfect being, he does not see with contempt and scorn the temptations to which flesh and blood is exposed, and to which it too often yields: he does not despise and reject his people, because of the trifles which disturb or please, occupy or divert them. It is our consolation, and it is told us as our consolation, that “we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”⁵ Christ, exalted as he is, is tenderly affected towards all those who are left for a while to work out their salvation in the world:

⁴ Luke xxii. 31.

⁵ Heb. iv. 15.

he sees their difficulties, and has pity for their trials and their weaknesses.

If any man were tossed by a storm at sea, and, while striving against it, could be persuaded that his friends on shore knew the perils which he was encountering, and were praying for his deliverance and safety,—the thought would comfort and encourage him.⁶ And Christ's disciples have this comfort. His heart is with them. He who is always near, is touched with a sense of their infirmities and trials, and is praying for them in heaven. How ought this to cheer us also, and strengthen us to maintain the contest against the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and whatever is not of the Father, but of the world!” He “whose we are, and whom we serve,” is praying the Father to help our infirmities, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to bring us safely out of a world of danger, into a world of peace and righteousness. *Now I come to thee, but these are in the world. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, and who have given themselves to me, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves, and that I may be glorified in them.*

⁶ Manton. Disc. on John xvii.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST
THAT HIS APOSTLES MAY BE PRESERVED
FROM THE EVIL OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xvii. 14—16.

14. *I have given them thy word ; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

15. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Our Lord here speaks of the state of his apostles, in reference to the world in which they were living. They were *not of it*: they were separated from it by a decided line. *They were not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Their views, their pursuits, their interests, all are different from the objects and sentiments of those from among whom they have been taken.

And this difference had been produced by his word ; the word which he had given them from the Father. *I have given them thy word.* That was true of them, which St. Peter applies afterwards to the Christians whom he was addressing. They were “ born again, not of corruptible seed, but of in-

corruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”¹

This word had told them that it was the Father’s will that they should come unto Him through the Son: that they should believe on him whom he had sent: that they should take his yoke upon them, and learn of him, and so find rest unto their souls. They had received t. I hearkened to the invitation which Jesus gave; had remained with him, when others “went back and walked no more with him;”² had deliberately chosen to leave all and follow him, because they believed that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The world around them; its leaders, the Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees, and the multitude who were governed by them, had rejected the word which the apostles had received. Therefore *the world hated them*: as it does hate those who separate themselves from it, who pursue a contrary course from the great majority, and in so doing,—by necessary consequence, though with no express intention,—seem to cast a censure upon those whom they leave behind. We have an instance in the man whose blindness had been removed, and who ventured to defend against the Pharisees the character of his benefactor. (John ix. 32.) “Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him,

¹ 1 Pet. i. 2, 3.

² John vi. 6.

Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.” Jesus had before alluded to this enmity, when discoursing with his brethren in Galilee.³ There he himself explains it. “The world cannot hate you;” has no reason for hating you: “but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”

The obvious remedy and consolation would be, that as the Lord whom they had followed, was now to be removed from the world which had hated him, to a world congenial to him, so should his disciples too. “To depart, and be still with Christ,” would be far better than to sojourn here in the midst of enmity and opposition, and put to hazard that faith, which had hitherto persevered.

This, however, is not our Lord’s prayer for these his people. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

It was impossible that they should be taken out of the world. Work was given them to do. They were to be “witnesses” of Christ: they were to set on high and display to public view that light which should “light every man that cometh into the world.”

But does the same reason apply to the disciples of Christ, and is it still the will of God that they should not be taken out of the world? Undoubt-

³ John vii. 7.

edly it is still the same, and for reasons which will prevail unto the end. God chooses that they should be tried. Though he knows what the event will be, and needs not that any should show him : still he chooses that his people should prove their faith, and patience, and labours of love, in sight of the many witnesses by which they are surrounded, and should, “after much tribulation, enter into the kingdom” prepared for them.⁴ Their “tribulation must work patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”⁵ They must submit to the cross before they wear the crown. They must consent to “suffer with Christ,” that they may also “reign with him.” And as his will concerning themselves is thus accomplished, so likewise his purpose towards others is promoted. The faithful disciples of Christ are living witnesses of the truth of his revelation and the power of his grace; and the *word given* by Christ to the apostles, the same word handed down from age to age, and not merely written in a book, but written in the hearts and read in the practice of living men, causes multitudes to fall down on their knees before God, and acknowledge that “God is in them of a truth.”⁶

Our Lord, therefore, does not pray that God *should take them out of the world, but that he should keep them from the evil.*⁷ From the evil one himself, and from the evil which proceeds from him, as its author and contriver.

⁴ Acts xiv. 22.⁵ Rom. v. 4.⁶ See 1 Cor. xiv. 25.⁷ ἀπο τοῦ πονηροῦ

Satan, the hater of righteousness and holiness, the enemy of God and man, will grievously assail those who are taken out of his hands. We are warned so. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."⁸ He is allowed to be the author and instrument of much of that trial which all the people of God are designed to undergo, that "they which are approved may be made manifest."⁹ But this enemy they cannot overcome in their own strength. He finds within too much in league with him, to be conquered by any power of ours; he knows too well the weaknesses which give him advantage over us, and the situation by which we are endangered.

Hence the prayer of Christ, that the faith of his disciples "fail not:" that God would *keep them from the evil*: "keep them by his power through faith unto salvation." It is the same prayer which we offer daily for ourselves: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

And how great is the comfort which we possess, in knowing of this support, and thinking of this prayer! To be assured that he who thus supported the apostles whom he was about to leave behind in a sinful world, is still at the right hand of God, to support all who "believe in him through their word!" That our salvation is the object of his desire, his care, his intercession! And that he will suffer none to perish who commit themselves to him! He "with the temptation

⁸ 1 Pet. v. 8.

⁹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

will make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” “If God be for us, who shall be against us?” For “who hath resisted his will?” And He is “for us.” If “he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!”¹

To Him, then, “who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever.”²

LECTURE LXXXV.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST THAT HIS APOSTLES MAY BE SANCTIFIED.

JOHN xvii. 17—19.

17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

18. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

We see from this prayer what our Lord thought most needful for his Disciples. What was needful

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

² Jude 25.

for them, is needful for us: what he prayed for in their behalf, ought to be the first and chief object of our prayer, for ourselves, and our children, and all in whose welfare we are concerned.

His prayer before had been, that they might be delivered from the evil that is in the world. And now he entreats farther, that they might be *sanctified*: “redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto God as a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” That God might have such a people—a people to whom he might be a Father, and they to him as dear children—was the purpose for which Christ had taken man’s nature upon him. *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* For this object a body had been prepared for him: he had come to do the will of God; had been solemnly acknowledged by him, as his “beloved Son;” and was now set apart, as “a Lamb without blemish, and without spot,” a voluntary sacrifice to the justice and holiness of the Father. Thus he had *sanctified himself*; as he had “power to lay down his life, and power to take it again;” and *for their sakes*: that he might bring them to everlasting salvation:—and not them alone; but might also bring to the same glory “those that should believe in him through their word:” in all ages and in all countries, “as many as receive him and believe in his name.”

Those for whom he was interceding now, were the first fruits of his self-consecration. And that

others might be partakers of the same, he was now sending these out into the world. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* With the same spirit, humbling themselves, “pleasing not themselves,” that by all means they might gain some: and with the same purpose; carrying the message of mercy, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God.” Christ had been sent, warning men to repent, and “flee from the wrath to come:” and so his apostles were sent, warning every man, that God “had appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”¹ Christ had come, declaring that he was “the way, the truth, and the life; that no man cometh unto the Father, but by him.” So his apostles went proclaiming that there was no other name under heaven by which we may be saved. Christ had invited all to share his mercy, declaring that whoever came unto him, he would in no wise cast out. And so his apostles went, declaring that “God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”² Christ had encouraged every one to apply to him; for the grace which he would give them, should be a living, purifying stream, “springing up into everlasting life.” And so his apostles went, directing men to supply their poverty from his fulness, and sustain their own weakness by his strength and power. Christ had been

¹ Acts xvii. 31.² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

sent with one great and general purpose, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” And how he sent his apostles out with the command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Thus they were sent, as he was sent, to build on his foundation, he himself being “the chief corner stone.”

Let each reflect for a moment, and consider whether this message has reached themselves. That which Jesus committed to his apostles, his apostles “committed to other faithful men;”³ and the lamp of eternal life has been transferred from hand to hand, till now it has reached us, “on whom the ends of the world are come.” Have we received it, as the light by which we are to be directed? Are we guided by it? Or are we still in spiritual darkness; and would the apostle have reason to address us in the words of that universal summons, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light?”⁴

The apostles, who were commissioned to call the world to righteousness, must needs be themselves as patterns to all who should become their followers, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”⁵ And therefore their Master prays that they may be made such. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* Called as they were, and chosen as they were, for

³ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 12.

God's especial purpose, they were still to be sanctified and fitted for his use, through those means which he has appointed for the renewal of our corrupt nature. *Sanctify them through thy word.* The word of God is the great instrument of sanctification: the weapon in the hand of the Spirit, by which the work of sanctification is carried on. Ineffective indeed without the Spirit, as the sword without the hand which ought to wield it: but mighty through the Spirit of God to the pulling down all the strongholds of Satan. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."⁶ As they were to be preachers and teachers of this word, so they must needs keep it, and hide it in their hearts: it should prove to them a treasury, out of which they should be able to instruct, and edify, and comfort both themselves and those who heard them. For that which David wrote, will be true to the end of time. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."⁷

⁶ Heb. iv. 12.⁷ Ps. xix. 7—9.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

JESUS EXTENDS HIS INTERCESSION TO ALL
WHO SHOULD HEREAFTER BELIEVE IN HIM.

JOHN xvii. 20—23.

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

21. *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

In a few short hours “the Captain of our salvation” was now to “be made perfect through sufferings.” And already he looks onward to the recompense of those sufferings; the “bringing many sons to glory.”¹ Known unto him are all the children of God from the beginning of the world; and he now makes them, as well as his immediate disciples, the objects of his prayer. He does not pray for his apostles alone, nor for those only who had already followed him, and remained with him; but he extends his view to distant times and future ages; to those who should hereafter come to believe in him *through the word* of those whom he was now sending forth to complete the work which he had begun. He prays that they, *which shall believe in him through their word*, may

¹ See Heb. ii. 10.

form an harmonious and united body: *that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.* And that being thus united, the children of one family, the members of one body, the subjects of one king, they might act as witnesses to the world: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

Our Lord had said before, “I pray not for the world.” His first purpose was to pray for those already “given him out of the world:” that they might be maintained in a firm and consistent course of life, “a peculiar people,” none of whom should be overcome by the malice of Satan, and so betray the trust and endanger the cause committed to their hands. These, therefore, are the main subjects of his present intercession. But it was not for their own sake merely, and to secure their own salvation, that these had been “chosen out of the world.” They were chosen and prepared and commissioned for the world’s sake: *that the world might believe that God had sent him:* believe that God “was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:” so that *through the word*, of the apostles first, and afterwards in all future time through the word of “other faithful men,”² “believers should be added to the Lord:” the “disciples should be multiplied greatly:”³ multitudes might “awake, and arise from the dead, and Christ should give them light.”⁴

And it was so. The prayer was heard and an-

² 2 Tim. ii. 2.

³ Acts v. 14; vi. 7.

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

swered. We read of the first believers, that they “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication:”⁵ that “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common.”⁶ Thus “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,” “multitudes both of men and women.”⁷ And every fresh believer was an additional evidence to the world that God had sent Christ Jesus, whom they, to whom he was first sent, had with wicked hands crucified and slain.”

The world has never been without this evidence. There have been, as there are, “divisions among” Christians. All have not “been like-minded one towards another.” All have not “had the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”⁸ All have not kept the apostles’ rule, and been “perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.”⁹ But from the earliest times there have existed multitudes of persons agreeing in this great truth: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”¹ These, whether more in number or fewer, form the church of Christ: and these, foreseen, foreknown by him, are here made the objects of his special intercession. *I pray for*

⁵ Acts i. 14.⁶ iv. 32.⁷ ii. 47; and v. 15.⁸ Rom. xv. 5. Phil. ii. 2.⁹ 1 Cor. i. 10.¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

them who shall believe in me through my apostles' word.

Of the privileges which belong to them he speaks in terms which surprise us, when he proceeds to say that he imparts to them a share in his own glory.

22. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one :

23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

St. James had great reason to leave it written in his epistle, " Let the brother of low degree"—we may say, let the Christian of every degree—" rejoice, in that he is exalted."² Highly indeed, as we here see, are those exalted who are made partakers of the covenant, and, " being justified by faith, have peace with God, through Jesus Christ." " The grace of their Lord, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," is theirs, and unites them, and supports them, and establishes them, and perfects them. And so the world is brought to know that " God is with them of a truth," that he in whom they trust, " the author and finisher of their faith," *hath loved them*, and is watching over them. Thus they furnish a perpetual evidence of the truth ; as the Lord again says, *that the world may know that thou hast sent me.*

When Jesus first began to perform his miracles, and show the power in which he came, we are told

² James i. 9.

that he cleansed a man of his leprosy : and then said to him, “ Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”³ It was a testimony that one had come into the world, who had a claim to their attention. The christian church, the body of believers in Christ Jesus, is a perpetual testimony of the like kind. It may be compared to an ark, ever floating through the wide and troubled waters of the world in which we live ; and inviting all to enter it, and take shelter from the threatening storm. Here they may find rest, though the rains fall, and the winds blow, and beat upon the soul. Many would like the safety which it offers, and many would wish to reach the haven to which it is bound, but they are deterred by the restraints and labours of the voyage, and refuse or delay to enter in. But there are likewise many who become alarmed by the flood which threatens on the one hand, or allured by the calm which tempts them on the other. And these from time to time are brought by the Spirit to climb the vessel’s side, and are added to the number of the ransomed, and join the safe and blessed company who are thus passing over the flood which separates them from the heavenly Canaan.

Let all remember, that the time to seek such a place of safety, is before the danger is come. The time to enter the ark, is while the deluge is still distant. When “ the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened ” — “ the Lord had shut the door ” of the

³ Matt. viii. 4.

ark which carried Noah and his family. And when “the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the face of the earth, the ark went upon the face of the waters.” “All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”*

And so “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations,” there shall be comfort and peace and safety to *all that have believed in him through the apostles’ word.*

LECTURE LXXXVII.

CONCLUSION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST FOR HIS APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 24—26.

24. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

Thus it is seen, according to the words of St. John in a preceding chapter, how “Jesus, having loved his own which were in the world, loved them

* See Gen. vii. 11—23.

unto the end.”¹ He concludes the prayer which we have been lately engaged in considering, with this petition: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.* From the beginning he had loved them, and separated them from the world; and now before he leaves the world, he provides for their eternal welfare; provides that “where he is, there also may his servants be,”² *that they may behold his glory*, and the Redeemer and the redeemed may rejoice together. And they are so represented, in every glimpse which is given us of the heavenly kingdom. “There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”³

That they may behold my glory! Let this teach us to raise and exalt our conception of the world to come. Scripture says, that they which are “counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of the dead,” are “as the angels of God in heaven.” Scripture says, that “they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.” Scripture says, that they “shall ever be with the Lord:” shall see him “face to face;” shall *behold the glory* which he had with the Father *before the foundation of the world*; though now he had “humbled himself;” had condescended to be “made flesh, and dwell among” men. This is the heaven which Scripture bids us look for; and not look for only, but pre-

¹ Ch. xiii. 1.² xii. 16.³ Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

pare for: since if this is heaven, “what manner of persons ought we all to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”

So that the difference between those whom *God has given to Christ*, and those whom he has not given, is as visible in their present state as it will be in their future condition. Those who will hereafter be partakers of Christ’s glory, are here distinguished as desiring it, seeking it, and living for it. Those who are to “rejoice with him,” in heaven, have begun by being his subjects in this world. So his concluding words imply.

25. *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*

26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Those, then, for whom Christ is now interceding, are those who differed from the world in this;—*the world had not known the Father*; but these had known him; and had given this proof of knowing him, that they had received the message which he had sent by his beloved Son.

And here is removed whatever doubt and difficulty might hang upon our minds from the words preceding—I will that those *whom thou hast given me*, be with me where I am. *Whom thou hast given me*. And who are these? We cannot examine the book in which their names are written. But there is an outward superscription which all

can read. *These have known that thou hast sent me.* They have received the Son, in the character which the Father sent him to sustain: received “him as made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”⁴ They have received him, as giving heavenly wisdom to those who were ignorant without him, as giving righteousness to those who had no righteousness of their own, as sanctifying those who were by nature corrupt and sinful, as redeeming those who were lying under condemnation.

It is a natural question, (and would that all should ask it!) Are we among those whom *God has given to Christ, that they may behold his glory?* And it must be answered by entering into our own hearts, and seeing what our faith is; and into our lives, and seeing what our practice is. *These have known that thou hast sent me.* Such is their short but sufficient description. They have known that thou hast sent me, “to save my people from their sins.” They have not closed their eyes to the proofs that I came from God. They have not closed their ears against the truths which they heard from me. They have not “loved darkness rather than light,” because of the evil deeds which they desired to persist in. But they have heard my invitation, and have listened to it; have “taken my yoke upon them, and learnt of me, that they might find rest unto their souls.”

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.

Such were they, who were the objects of the Redeemer's prayer, and for whose comfort and encouragement he left the words on record, *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory.* Of these he says, *I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* Because "the world had not known God:" because "no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." "And this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

This is life eternal. But it must be reserved for that eternal state to understand fully the secret wonders involved in this mysterious prayer. St. Paul felt that he could ask no higher blessing for his beloved disciples, than that "being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God."⁵

⁵ Eph. iii. 17—19.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

JESUS IS TAKEN BY THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS, AND BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST.

JOHN xviii. 1—23.

1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*¹

2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

4. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*

5. *They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

6. *As soon then as he had said unto them I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

7. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said Jesus of Nazareth.*

8. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:*

9. *That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

A striking scene is presented to us here. “The rulers stand up and take counsel together against the

¹ The garden called Gethsemane.

Lord and against his anointed.”² But in this they accomplish the secret purposes of him against whom they had conspired : he, against whom they had conspired, and whom they came to take as a criminal by surprise, meets the band of men and officers, and says at once, *I am he whom ye seek.*

That which ye come to do against me, is determined from above, or it could not be done at all : and therefore you hear me openly declare, *I am he.*

It was quickly proved that whatever power they had against him, was “given them from above :” for, hearing him acknowledge, *I am he*, instead of seizing him, they *went backward, and fell to the ground.* An emblem of that time which is foretold, when all the enemies of Christ shall “say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”³

Still, however, Jesus was to suffer, though he laid down his life of himself, and no man took it from him. But he first provides for the safety of his apostles.” “Those whom he loved, he loved unto the end.” *If ye seek me, let these go their way.* He knew their strength, that it was but weakness : therefore he proportions their trial to it : and allows them not to be tempted “above that which they were able to bear.” Hereafter they might have resolution to say, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.”⁴ At present their strength was but like “the bruised

² Ps. ii. 2.³ Rev. vi. 16.⁴ Acts xx. 24.

reed;" it must not be overmuch tried: their faith was but that of "smoking flax;" the spark must not be quenched. Therefore let these be permitted to go their way; that the saying lately spoken might remain true to the end: *Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

Such tenderness may encourage the humble followers of a compassionate Lord, whilst they "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

There was, however, amongst them one who, though weak and unstable, was ardent in zeal, and eager in his Master's cause.

10. *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

11. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,*

13. *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

14. *Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.*

16. *But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

17. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art thou not also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*

18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*

19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.*

20. *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.*

21. *Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

22. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?*

23. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

We are shocked, as there is reason to be, at the indignity thus offered to him whom we adore as our Lord and our God. But wise ends have been served by it, on account of which it might be permitted.

1. We are taught the proper way to meet indignities. Jesus, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." But he appealed to law and reason. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* He silenced and convicted his oppressor. If anything has been done against the ordinances of the state or the rights of individuals,

bear witness of the evil; I am here to answer it. But if not, *why smitest thou me?* with no authority of law, and in opposition to all justice and decency? So St. Paul, following his Master's example, remonstrated with those who were preparing to try him by torture. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"⁵ God has so ordered human affairs, that the protection which the enmity of an adversary would often deny his servants, is cast around them by the laws which individual interest obliges men to observe.

2. Another and a different purpose is likewise answered by this circumstance. Jesus suffered this harsh and cruel treatment, as one who bore a message from God unto the world. This enmity would not have been displayed towards him, if he had not appeared as "a preacher of righteousness:"—if he had not said to the people, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish:"—if he had not testified against them that they knew not God in whom they made their boast; that they nullified his laws; that "their deeds were evil." Many of his followers, at different times, have been called to endure a like measure of ill treatment; and they have had this consolation under injury, "The servant is not greater than his lord." If they are despised and rejected, if they are treated as Barabbas was not treated, ("who *for a certain sedition and murder* was cast into prison,"⁶) still let

⁵ Acts xxii. 25.

⁶ Luke xxiii. 19 and 25.

them rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they their Master which was before them; and “if so be that they suffer with him, they shall be also glorified together.”⁷ He, “for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.”

If then any man be called “to suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Nay, let him “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also, with exceeding joy.”⁸

LECTURE LXXXIX.

JESUS EXPLAINS TO PILATE THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM.

JOHN xviii. 24—40.

24. *Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.*

25. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.*

26. *One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?*

⁷ Rom. viii. 17.

⁸ 1 Pet. iv. 16 and 13.

27. *Peter then denied again : and immediately the cock crew.*

We are reminded here of the saying of Moses, (Numb. xxxii. 23,) “ Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord : and be sure your sin will find you out.” When *the cock crew*, and foretold that the morning was approaching, an arrow pierced the soul of Peter, of which no one present but himself was conscious. St. Matthew acquaints us, that he “ remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”¹

It was happy that his sin did find him out, and was not concealed from himself; that his heart was not “ hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” but, like David before him, he confessed that he had “ sinned against the Lord :” he went out, and wept bitterly.

28. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment : and it was early ; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled ; but that they might eat the passover.*

29. *Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man ?*

30. *They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*

31. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death :*

¹ Matt. xxvi. 75.

32. *That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.*²

33. *Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?*

34. *Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?*

35. *Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?*

36. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

37. *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

38. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

39. *But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*

40. *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

The question asked by Pilate was concerning Christ's kingdom. And in no sense was *his kingdom of this world*. He had it not of the will of

² Execution by the cruel mode of *crucifixion* was only in use among the Romans. Unless, therefore, Jesus had been delivered to the Roman governor, he would not have been *crucified*.

man. It was not to be set up by “carnal weapons:” the power by which it should be supported, was spiritual: and the citizenship of its subjects was not on earth, but in heaven.³

This is very obvious. We must not forget, however, what is no less true. He is a king, though not an earthly king: he has a kingdom, though his kingdom is not *of this world*. Pilate said unto him, *Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* It is a calm and quiet mode of assenting to the truth which had been put into the mouth of Pilate. I am a king: *but my kingdom is not from hence. Thou sayest that I am a king.* And thou sayest truly. From God, and from heaven, though not of *this world*, or from man, Christ has a kingdom. It is given him of God: as he has said, The Father hath “delivered all things into his hand,” and has “given him power over all flesh.” And of his sovereignty it is written, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom:”⁴ and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “He must reign,” we are assured, “till he hath put all enemies under his feet. How awful are his own words, though the words of him who is “meek and lowly in heart,” when he alludes to the future doom of the disobedient: “Those mine enemies, who

³ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπαρχει. Our conversation, citizenship, is in heaven. Phil. iii. 20.

⁴ See Heb. i. 8.

would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.”⁵

In this sense, therefore, Christ would have a kingdom, even if none obeyed him. But he who has assigned him power, has given him subjects too. According to his own words, addressed to the Father:” “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” As men are the subjects of him whom they obey, he whose subjects obey him is a king. He reigns in the hearts of those who believe in him. At the moment when he was speaking; when he was bound as a prisoner, and seemed to have resigned all earthly authority and power; even then there were some hearts in which he was reigning: there were some who were ready to act, or to forbear to act, as he prescribed. The number of these quickly increased, as “the word of God grew mightily and prevailed.” And as far as their number is extended, and as far as this dominion is felt and recognised, so far he is a king.

The truth, then, which Pilate inquired for in a trifling spirit, but which he did not stay to hear, is known to us, and we must cherish it. From God and from heaven, though not of the world, or from man, Christ has a kingdom. His subjects are known by certain signs. Though his name is not visibly sealed in their foreheads,⁶ it is written in their hearts. And “the life which they live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them.”

⁵ Luke xix. 27.

⁶ See Rev. vii. 3; ix. 4.

By his laws they are ruled and guided. For by this may all men know that they are Christ's disciples, "that they keep his commandments."

Such is the kingdom which Christ possesses *in* this world, though not *of* this world. Here is its beginning. Its continuance will be for ever and ever in the mansions above. Those who belong to it here, will belong to it hereafter. And those who are to share it hereafter, must belong to it here. To those who "endure unto the end," "striving against sin;" to those who "overcome the world," believing "that Jesus is the Son of God," "he will grant to sit with him on his throne."⁷

"Let every man retire into himself, and see if he can find this kingdom in his heart: for if he find it not there, in vain shall he find it in all the world besides."⁸

⁷ See 1 John v. 5; and Rev. iii. 21.

⁸ Hales.

LECTURE XC.

PILATE CONSENTS TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

JOHN xix. 1—16.

1. *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.*

2. *And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,*

3. *And said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands.*

4. *Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.*

5. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man !*

6. *When the chief priests therefore and the officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him : for I find no fault in him.*

7. *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*

8. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid ;*

9. *And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer.*

10. *Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto*

me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ?

11. *Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Pilate naturally presumes upon his power over Jesus, as over any other accused person who might be brought before him. But here Jesus corrects his error. *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.* This I have shown sufficiently, by the way in which I have hitherto preserved myself, and by the “miracles and signs and wonders” by which I have been “approved of God” amongst the people.¹ *He who hath delivered me unto thee* has seen these proofs that I am the Son of God : and they who have treated with him that he should thus deliver me up, have seen the same : therefore both he and they *have the greater sin.* Greater, not in comparison with the sin of Pilate, but greater than they would have had if they had not hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes against the truth. As had been said formerly,”² “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.”

This remark is not without its effect upon the governor.

12. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him : but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.*

¹ Acts ii. 22.

² ch. xv. 24.

13. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.*

14. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour ; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king !*

15. *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king ? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.*

16. *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.*

The character of Pilate is a far more common character than men are willing to suppose. Many act very much as he did, though in circumstances very different. And it is instructive to observe the manner in which two opposite principles contended within him : on the one hand, natural conscience and a sense of right ; and, on the other, love of the world.

Pilate had manifestly strong compunctious feelings. The calmness of the prisoner who stood before him ; his refusal to propitiate his judge ; his resignation under torture, and indifference concerning life or death ; and doubtless, the indescribable sublimity of deportment which belonged to him under all circumstances ; the grace and truth which never could forsake him ;—all these affected Pilate in a manner to which he was not accustomed. *Whence art thou ?* he inquires. *Speakest thou not unto me ?* “*Hearst thou not how many things these witness against thee ?*” “*And he answered him to never a word ; insomuch that the gover-*

nor marvelled greatly.”³ *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him.*

These feelings of his own were much aided by another circumstance. For “when he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man ; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”⁴

Pilate was now in that state of mind which is the state of multitudes in a country like ours. What he felt in regard to Jesus, they feel in regard to the religion of Jesus. They perceive that it is not of man, but of God. Its doctrines show this ; so does the power which it exercises in the world. Perhaps many of their friends and relations have received it ; are governed by its laws, and supported by its promises : they are themselves at times uneasy whilst they remain in a careless, undecided state ; and they would be very unwilling to appear the enemies of Christ or the christian cause.

Why do they stand aloof ? Why continue only “almost Christians ?”

For the same reason, for a reason of the same sort, as that which affected Pilate.

Whilst he was hesitating between conscience and duty on the one side, and the demands of the people on the other, the Jews seized the interval of suspense, and *cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend ; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.*

³ Matt. xxvii. 14.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 19.

Now Pilate was a governor : and, like other governors, was anxious to approve himself to his superior, and probably to obtain some higher step, some better appointment. Not to be Cæsar's friend, was to be Cæsar's enemy. And *therefore when Pilate heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth* : and, after one more struggle—*delivered him unto them to be crucified.*

Thus the world gained the victory. Conscience, reason, inclination—fell before it. For a while the scale vibrated, and seemed to hang doubtful : and if there had been no strong bias on the other side, conscience would have prevailed : but when it became clear that if conscience was to be obeyed and duty done, the world must be abandoned—the things of the world risked, perhaps lost—there was no farther question in Pilate's mind, and the world carried every other consideration down before it.

Now the same case frequently occurs in regard to Christian faith. There are many in the state which I was describing ; convinced, but not conquered ; silenced, but not subdued ; not denying, not doubting ; nay, in their inward mind and judgment, believing. Soon, however, a trial comes, which must bring the matter to an issue. They must show, whether the faith of Christ has dominion over them or not. This never can long remain uncertain. No man can serve God and mammon : and it must always be soon evident which he is serving. In every rank and station of life temptations exist, and circumstances occur

which put it to the proof. And when the trying time arrives in which it must be shown, whether a man is a disciple of Christ or of the world, too often the case of Pilate is acted over again. *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.* So said the Jews; and in like manner will the world say, If such and such is thy line of conduct, thou art not our friend. "Art thou also of Galilee?" Art thou also "this man's disciple?"

Such sayings, or the fear of such sayings, the fear of some worldly risk, the love of some worldly gain, are the immediate cause of ruin to many souls. They lead to compliances, omissions, and transgressions which grieve and quench the Spirit of God. What is wanting to them, is what was wanting to Pilate; such faith in "things not seen, and eternal," as shall overcome the influence of "things seen and temporal."

And yet we can easily imagine a case which would have overcome the world in Pilate, and made him resolute instead of wavering. Suppose, for example, the appearance of Jesus, who was now standing as a criminal before Pilate, had been suddenly changed, and he had been seen by him as he was seen by the three apostles on Mount Tabor, when he was "transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."⁵ Pilate would have no longer doubted: he would have decided at once, to offend the people, and defy Cæsar.

⁵ Matt. xvii. 2.

This shows us what we need. It is the business of faith, to set before us things that are not, as if they were; to enable us to see in Jesus not the "man of sorrows" who stood before Pilate, but the Son of man who "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him." It is the business of faith to give a substantial existence to "things hoped for," so as to produce a real effect upon the mind, and enable it to overcome the world. The truths to which Jesus bore witness must be imprinted on the heart by the Spirit: and so realize things future and unseen, that earthly objects shall lose their hold: shall prevail no further than they justly and rightly may. We must see their perishable nature: how little they profit, and for how short a time. What remains to Pilate of all that he gained by complying with the sinful malice of the Jewish rulers? What but the worm of remorse "that never dieth," and the darkness which no light shall relieve? And such at last will be the case with all, who in this present time of trial ^{by} the pleasures, or the gains, or the opinions ^{of the} world, before a consistent life of faith in the God. For he has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."⁶

⁶ Mark viii. 38.

LECTURE XCI.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

JOHN xix. 17—30.

17. *And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a scull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha :*

18. *Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.*

19. *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

20. *This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

21. *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am King of the Jews.*

22. *Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

Thus God overrules the wrath of man, and causes it to minister to his praise. Pilate was disconcerted ; angry with the chief priests, because they had urged him to act against his conscience and better judgment : and, in obedience to his own humour, he refuses to gratify them further, or alter the title which he had framed, *Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews*. Caiaphas had already been

led to say, "It is expedient that one man die for the people." So Pilate now testifies the truth, which before he was most anxious to deny. He had no scruple in allowing Jesus to be called the KING OF THE JEWS, now that he had been crucified. And it was as Christ crucified that he was king: and king not of that nation only, but "God had given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to all the children of God that are scattered abroad." .

23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.*

24. *They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

This is a part of a prophecy which David was inspired to utter. In the midst of complaints which refer to himself and his own circumstances, he introduces many things which never did occur to himself, and which could only have been left written for the instruction and conviction of those who should live in future times. (Ps. xxii. 1, 7, 8, 14—18.) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my complaint? All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him; let him de-

liver him, seeing he delighted in him. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet: I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

No one can read these words, and perceive that they did not and could not apply to David in his own person, but were put into his mouth for the purpose of confirming our faith, and showing us that nothing happened to the Lord which had not been foreseen and predetermined in the divine counsels.¹ So that both in his death, and in the minute circumstances of his death, he was truly "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."²

Lord, increase our faith! It is not the Lamb slain, but the Lamb believed on and adored, which can avail to the saving of the soul.

25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

26. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,³ he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

¹ Acts iv. 28; xiii. 27.

² Rev. xiii. 8

³ So St. John commonly describes himself.

27. *Then saith he to his disciple, Behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

29. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.⁴*

30. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

It is finished. Much that we know, and much more that is too mysterious to be known, is contained in this word.⁵ That has been finished which was predicted at the first, that the serpent should "bruise the heel" of the woman's seed, as the seed should "bruise the serpent's head." This was done: the prince of darkness had had his hour, and now his dominion was broken, his power weakened, his "works destroyed."⁶

That was finished which had been prefigured in the law, by the rite of the passover, by the daily sacrifices, by the various purifications, by the

⁴ Raising it on the stem of a species of hyssop, which resembles a reed. Thus fulfilling the scripture, which had said, (Ps. lxxix. 21,) "They gave me also gall for my meat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink." The accomplishment of this prophecy depended upon the attendance of the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion. This vinegar, mixed with water, was their beverage.

⁵ The original contains more than can be briefly expressed: *τετελεσται.*

⁶ 1 John iii. 8.

office of the high priest, by all the types of that sacrifice for sin which Christ had now once offered : and “by that one offering had perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”⁷

That was finished which Isaiah had prophesied, (liii. 7, 8,) speaking beforehand of the sufferings of Christ. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment ; and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

That was finished which Christ had engaged for when he undertook the work of redemption : all the will and counsel of God. He had “made his soul an offering for sin ; he had borne the sin of many :” he had endured the Father’s wrath, he had submitted to the curse, he had drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs. All this had been completely finished ; and nothing now remained but to return to the bosom of the Father. But Jesus showed, even to the end, that he had “power to lay down his life ;” that he “laid it down of himself, and no man took it from him.” For he waited till the last prophecy had been fulfilled, and he had tasted of the vinegar which they offered him. He waited till he was able to say, *It is finished*. And then he added, “Father, into thy hands I com-

⁷ Heb. x. 14.

mend my spirit:" and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

All had been completed which the Son was to perform in the work of man's redemption. Let no man doubt that the Father's part shall also be completed. Christ "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And God, who "so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son," that he might thus suffer: God "is not unrighteous" to refuse the ransom which has been paid, or to reject those who come to him through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Christ could say, *It is finished*. And as the conditions have been finished, so likewise shall the covenant be fulfilled. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."⁸

⁸ Isa. liii. 11, 12.

LECTURE XCII.

THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY IN THE DEATH
OF JESUS.

JOHN xix. 31—42.

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*

32. *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.*

33. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs :*

34. *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.¹*

35. *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*

36. *For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*

¹ Such is the case, when the regions of the heart are wounded. And St. John is thus particular, because some of the early heretics denied that Jesus actually underwent these sufferings and death, affirming that a phantom was substituted in his room. For this reason, probably, the evangelist proceeds to assert more solemnly than usual, *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true.* He saw what he could not have seen, unless real death had taken place.

37. *And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*

The passage is remarkable, in which these latter words are found. (Zech. xii. 10.) “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications : *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,* and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Of whom could the prophet say this? In what other man has it ever been fulfilled?

But it was fulfilled in regard to the Lord Jesus. Not two months after the event which we are considering, Peter affirmed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”² Then, says the historian, “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” It came to pass according to the prophecy : “God poured upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications :” they did “*look on him whom they had pierced,*” and did “mourn for him.”

But Peter said further unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about

² Acts ii. 36, &c.

three thousand souls." Thus they once more *looked on him whom they had pierced*;—before they regarded him with contrition and sorrow; now they looked to him for remission of sins: looked to the wounds which they had given, which he had received "in the house of his friends,"³ as the wounds suffered for their transgressions, and by which they might themselves be healed.

The time, we trust, will come hereafter, when the prophecy shall have a more complete fulfilment; and the house of Israel and the house of Judah generally shall answer to the expressions of the prophet: shall mourn for the sin of their nation, which crucified the "Prince of life;" shall look up to him whom they pierced, for reconciliation with God, and to that death which they caused, as the ransom for their sins.

Such a season appears to be foretold in Scripture, when God shall pour upon the descendants of Abraham this spirit of grace and of supplications. But we do not wait for any distant season, that the words may receive an accomplishment. They are accomplished in all who believe in Christ Jesus, and look to him for salvation. On account of sin was he pierced: and the sins which pierced him were our sins. Every man's individual sin contributed to his death. And while we regard with astonishment and thankfulness the atonement which he made, we should also regard

³ Zech. xiii. 6. "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

it with sorrow and contrition. Every man should think within himself, Had I not been under condemnation as a sinner, Judas would not have betrayed the Saviour, the people would not have insulted him, the soldiers would not have scourged him, Pilate would not have delivered him up, the nails and the spear would not have pierced him. If we felt this as we ought to feel it, we should more nearly resemble the language of Zechariah: we should be more sincerely “in bitterness for him;” for him who was “bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions,” and on whom it pleased the Lord to “lay the iniquity of us all.”⁴

There is still deeper reason for this sorrow, when they who have professed to receive “the grace of God which bringeth salvation,” and to believe in the name of Christ, have betrayed their faith, and walked unworthily of their high calling. The apostle speaks of such in the strongest language; saying, that they “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”⁵ Yet are they not cast off for ever: they may still “repent, and do their first works.”⁶ “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.”⁷ But what does that advocate plead? The very propitiation which they have disgraced; the very wounds which they have aggravated; the very cross on which sin was crucified to them, and they to sin. While then they still *look on him whom they pierced*, and are thankful that they are

⁴ Isa. 1. 3. ⁵ Heb. vi. 6. ⁶ Rev. ii. 5. ⁷ 1 John ii. 2.

still permitted to look up to him, surely they must “mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that mourneth for his firstborn.”

38. *And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.*

39. *And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.*

40. *Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.*

41. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.*

42. *There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

Thus in an unexpected manner was the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled, as he who had been “numbered with the transgressors” was “with the rich in his death;” had the burial of a rich man. The event was unlikely, so was the mode in which it was brought about. Two persons who had hitherto kept back, and hesitated to avow themselves disciples of Jesus, come forward now and effect that which his own party of faithful adherents would have attempted in vain. Fear of man had hitherto made Joseph his disciple *secretly*: fear of man had carried Nicodemus to him *by night* for instruction. But now all such apprehensions va-

nish; sorrow for his loss, and love for his memory, became a stronger feeling than the world's opinion: and, with this courageous proof of devotion and attachment, the body of Jesus is laid in the grave.

And when he shall hereafter appear, clothed in his "glorious body," and all nations shall be gathered before him, then shall also this, which these disciples did, "be told for a memorial of them."⁸

LECTURE XCIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IS MADE KNOWN TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN XX. 1—18.

1. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

2. *Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*

3. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.*

4. *So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*

* See Matt. xxvi. 13.

5. *And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in.*

6. *Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,*

7. *And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

8. *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*

9. *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*

St. John here tells us, what doubtless had never been erased from his own mind, the state in which the apostles were after the burial of Jesus. *As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.* They knew the words of scripture, but did not apply the proper meaning to them. The sabbath therefore, though “a high day,” a festival, the greatest sabbath of the year, was to them a day of the deepest melancholy and gloom. They had seen him, in whom they had trusted that he “should redeem Israel,” made a victim to the malice of his enemies : they had seen him whom they loved, and who loved them, expire in torments, and laid out in the tomb, where all their fondest hopes lay buried with him. Nothing now remained but to pay the last sad honours to his memory.

For this purpose, the sabbath was no sooner past, than very early in the morning came Mary Magdalene and other women with her, “bringing spices

which they had prepared" to embalm the body. On their way "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre?" But when they came to the place, they found that the stone was taken away.² Still further, on entering in, they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Mary Magdalene, upon this, hastened back, to the city, for all the tombs were on the outside of the walls, *and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*

In the mean time the other women remained on the spot. "And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout,³ behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Be not affrighted: ye see Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he

¹ "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Matthew.—"Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome." Mark.—"Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women." Luke.—St. John mentions only Mary Magdalene, because she had been the person who brought the first report: but her words intimate that she had not been alone. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and *we* know not where they have laid him." When she *was* alone, afterwards, v. 13, she uses the *singular form*.

² How this had happened, we must collect from St. Matthew. "Behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."

³ See Matthew, Mark, and Luke, except that, according to St. Mark, "They saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment."

is risen ; he is not here : behold the place where they laid him. But go quickly, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”

“ The women remembered his words, and went out quickly : for they trembled and were amazed :” in their alarm and astonishment they “ said nothing to any man” on the spot or by the way : but returned from the sepulchre, and ran to bring the disciples word, and told all these things unto the eleven, and unto all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and “ they believed them not.”⁴

Peter and John, however, whom we have always seen to be, the one the most ardent and zealous, the other the most faithful of the apostles, were too much interested in what had been told them, to be content without further examination. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.*⁵ John stooped down and

⁴ St. Luke here observes, “ It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. He does not specify that Mary Magdalene had arrived first, and brought her account separately.

⁵ St. Luke does not mention that Peter *entered* the tomb, or that *John accompanied* Peter. He leads us, however, to suppose what otherwise we might have doubted, that these two were with the rest when the women came, and that Mary Magdalene had not seen them separately. For after stating, *They believed them not* : he proceeds, *Then arose Peter*, and ran unto the sepulchre.

saw the linen clothes lying : Peter following him, went in : and they “ beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves,” and all things as the women had reported : he saw and believed that it was as Mary had said ;⁶ “ and departed, wondering at that which was come to pass.” They still thought of explaining the circumstances in some other way, and were not yet prepared to receive as certain the astonishing fact of the resurrection. We consider this as strange. The belief of the resurrection of the body has been made familiar to us. We should not have had the same just reason to believe it, if the apostles had believed without indisputable evidence and full examination.

10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

11. *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping :⁶ and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,*

12. *And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

13. *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

14. *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.*

To prevent the too great surprise, or sudden

⁶ She had returned to it, we may suppose, following Peter and John.

alarm which might have struck her, he revealed himself by degrees.

15. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Then in a voice which she had so long known, and so often heard with veneration,

16. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

17. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God, and your God.*

18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

Such was the gracious message with which he announced the truth which they were so slow to comprehend. He does not upbraid them for their disbelief of his own plain words; he does not condemn them for deserting him in the hour of trial; they are still his *brethren*: his Father is their Father, his God their God.

And not theirs only, but the God and Father of all who “believe in him through their word.” Such is the mercy which he has wrought for his disciples. He has caused his Father to adopt them as his children, and his God to protect them with his almighty power. He hath put away the sins, which “made a separation between them and their God.”

Is it so with yourselves? Is the God and Father to whom Christ has ascended, your God and your Father, to whom you are reconciled, to whom you have access through the Son? Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is the blessing which you enjoy. He who made the worlds, is your gracious Father: he who governs all things, is your merciful God: he has entered into covenant with you; and is pledged, that in this life “all things shall work together for your eventual good;” pledged to raise you up to eternal life at the last day.

Strive to keep “this jewel of your hope” unbroken to the end. “Watch and pray,” and by his grace you shall keep it. For he who has bestowed it upon you is ascended to his Father and your Father, and to his God and your God.

LECTURE XCIV.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES, AND GIVES
THEM HIS COMMISSION.

JOHN XX. 19—23.

19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

20. *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

For the same purpose and to the same end I commission you. In this sense, the apostles were sent into the world as the Son was sent into the world. In another sense Christ stood alone. The Father sent the Son, first, to be “the propitiation for our sins:” to “give his life a ransom for many.” This office no man could share with him. And further, Christ was perfect and infallible; such as no descendant of Adam can be. But then he was also sent into the world, to preach “the gospel of peace,” “the gospel of the kingdom:” “to seek and to save that which was lost.” For this purpose the Father had sent him. And for this purpose he now

commissions the apostles, to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:” that as many as believe in him whom God hath sent, may “not come into condemnation, but have eternal life.”

It was an arduous enterprise. “Unreasonable and wicked men” would oppose themselves: they were to “wrestle not against flesh and blood” alone, but against the powers of darkness, and the wiles of the devil.¹ How should they overcome this malice? How discern the spirits which were for them, and the spirits which were against them? How distinguish the worldly and self-interested, from the sincere and earnest who “sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?” They must be endued with power from on high: with power which men naturally have not, and with which other men have never since been endued: power which should enable them to distinguish between the hypocrite and the penitent, and to know the child of God from the child of Satan. This power should not be denied them.

22. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;*

23. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

Thus directed by the Holy Ghost, Peter could not be deceived by the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira: and said ‘o the wife, whose husband had already suffered the penalty of his fraud,

¹ See Eph. vi. 11, 12.

“How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.”² By virtue of the same power, “Saul set his eyes on Elymas the sorcerer, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.”³ By virtue of the same power, he directed that a transgressor in the church of Corinth should be “delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh:” and afterwards declares, that “now in the person of Christ he forgives him.”⁴

The power, then, of *remitting or retaining sins* was committed in a peculiar manner to the apostles, and with it, the discerning of spirits which such power required. But we must carefully note, that even as exercised by them, this absolution or condemnation did not extend beyond the present world. They did not put themselves in the place of God, “to kill or to make alive” in reference to eternity. They did not contradict the sentiment, “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” Their Master “had power on earth to forgive sins,” and claimed it, and exercised it: but the Jews who accused him on this head, and were forward enough

² Acts v. 1—11.

³ Acts xiii. 9—11.

⁴ 1 Cor. v. 5; 2 Cor. ii. 10.

to find blame against the apostles, never saw reason to bring such an allegation against them.

The authority, then, to *remit sins*, or to *retain sins*, was limited to the apostles, and to the present world. Why, then, do we say to the ministers of our church, “Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven: and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained?”⁵

Because, though the power of forgiving or retaining sin in their own person is not transferred to them, the conditions are entrusted to them on which sin is forgiven or retained. They cannot say, as their Lord had said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.” They cannot say, like the apostles, “Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” They cannot say, “Those who have buried thy husband shall carry thee out.” Even the apostles used this power on rare occasions. Their ordinary course was to use such words, as every minister of Christ is bound to use. “Repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “By him all that believe are justified from all things.”⁶

The ministers who follow their steps declare the same. They testify the forgiveness of sins past: testify that they are the messengers of the gospel of peace, which invites all men to salvation:⁷ and proclaim that “God was in Christ, reconciling the

⁵ Ordination service. ⁶ Acts ii. 38; xvi. 31; xiii. 39.

⁷ Calvin in loco.

world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them : and hath committed unto them the word of reconciliation.”⁸ And though they speak with authority, as ambassadors of God, they do not pretend that authority is given them in their own persons to absolve the soul from guilt, or to retain it under condemnation. But in obedience to the message entrusted to them, they pronounce whose sins are remitted ; and at the same time they pronounce whose sins are retained. Thus, and thus only, do they *remit sin*, or *retain sin*. And their ministry is, by intent and purpose, as the apostle says, “ a savour of life unto life towards them that believe ;” and by consequence, and only by consequence,⁹ “ a savour of death unto death ”¹ in them that perish.

Ministers, therefore, are to be esteemed and reckoned as “ stewards of the mysteries of God.”² “ Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful :” that he dare not to pronounce forgiveness, where God has not forgiven ; or condemnation, where God has not condemned. The words of God are very severe upon this point, as delivered to the prophet Ezekiel.³ “ Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing ! Because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, when there is no

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 19.

⁹ “ In that we are reconciled to God, this is proper to the gospel : and it is an accidental thing, that unbelievers are adjudged to eternal death.” Calvin, ubi supra.

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16. ² 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. ³ xiii. passim.

peace.—Will ye pollute me among my people, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live?—With lies, ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad: and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.”

Warnings like these should instruct both the people and the minister. The minister, that he speak as one “who shall give account:” and the people, that they refer “to the law and to the testimony,” and “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.”⁴ He alone, who could *breathe upon* his apostles, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*: he alone in his own person had power on earth to save or to condemn. For thus he reveals himself: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death.”⁵

⁴ 1 John iv. 1.

⁵ Rev. i. 18.

LECTURE XCV.

THE UNBELIEF OF THE APOSTLE THOMAS
LEADS TO A DECLARATION OF THE BLESSED-
NESS OF THE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 24—31.

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

26. *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

27. *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing.*

28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

30. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.*

31. *But these are written, that ye might believe that*

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.

A proof of Christ's resurrection, of his resurrection in the same body which had died, was here given to Thomas, which banished every doubt. But it is a proof which others can never see. And he was allowed to require it, and it was granted him, to confirm the faith and increase the comfort of future Christians. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.*

It was needful that the Lord should be seen in the form of man by those who were to bear witness concerning him. It was needful that some should be able to say, like St. John, "The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory." We saw his miracles, and we heard his discourses.

So, again, after his resurrection he was seen not by the apostles only, but "by above five hundred brethren at once."¹ They saw, and *because they saw, believed.*

But he could not possibly be seen by those who were hereafter to become his disciples, and have life through his name. These must believe in him "through their word:" that is, on the report of those who had lived with him in the flesh, and witnessed his death and his ascension.

Looking forward to these, the Lord declares to his incredulous apostle, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Like those to

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 5.

whom St. Peter wrote, and of whom he speaks, after mentioning the name of Christ: “whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Our Lord has left to these, and such as these, the comfort of knowing that they were in his mind, and graciously thought of, from the moment when the salvation wrought by him was about to be published to the world. He pronounces them BLESSED. Let us consider why.

They are at peace with God. “Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ.” And without this there is no peace. The desire of it first led them to the Redeemer. The desire of it first brought them to apply to him, and completed in their own persons the covenant of their baptism. And this they possess and enjoy: it is not a blessing for which they are to wait till some future time: of which they are to have no present sense or knowledge; they are not to linger in hope that the favour of God, his acceptance of their persons, his forgiveness of their sins, will be made over to them at some distant day: but it is already theirs; and their privilege is, in the language of the Liturgy, “being cleansed from their sins, to serve God with a quiet mind.”

This is the foundation of their blessedness. They are blessed, also, because they are delivered from “the dominion of sin,” delivered from this present evil world, “and enabled through the Spirit working in them to subdue the lusts of the flesh.” They

are blessed, also, because they have secured to themselves, as they pass through this weary wilderness, a shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power. They have the confidence expressed by St. Paul, "My God shall supply all your need." They have the assurance which was granted to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

In all this there is as much of blessedness, as the present life is capable of receiving.

Still it is our present life: and it is life in a fallen world. The sinfulness which adheres to the heart, even after the power of sin is broken, still interrupts and disturbs its peace. And the many wants, the many afflictions which exist, and from which the children of God are not exempted, often make us confess and feel, that here is not our hope: that the blessedness promised to the Christian is something which cannot be found below: that he must set his affections on things above, and look there, at God's right hand, for "the fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

And this is the real cause, why the Lord here so solemnly pronounces those blessed who believe: because theirs is the kingdom prepared of God for the righteous; because theirs are the good things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." We grievously undervalue this: our spirits, tied and bound by this present world, are unable to think of it as it deserves. But our Lord knew, well and fully knew, the nature, and the reality,

and the extent of that happiness. He had a complete acquaintance with the things laid up at God's right hand for them that love him : and therefore he says, *Blessed are they that have believed*, because they shall possess those joys. At the moment, they may not feel themselves blessed. But he to whom the future is present ; he to whom what shall be is as if it were, he sees beyond their trials, their labours, and their sorrows, and anticipates the end. He knew, for example, that his apostles should suffer all that makes this life grievous ; imprisonment, the scourge, reproach, hunger, cold, and nakedness. Yet he said, " Blessed are ye ; for great is your reward in heaven." He knew that his followers would often groan heavily in spirit, being burthened with the sense of their inward corruptions and rebellious desires. Yet he said, " Blessed are the poor in spirit." He knew that many of those whom God would hereafter give him, would languish in poverty, would be oppressed by sickness and by pain. Yet he said, " Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh." The case may be compared to what took place at the death of the first martyr, Stephen. Those who stood by, and saw him stretched along the ground, bleeding, and bruised, and maimed, and gasping for breath, might pity him, as if brought to the lowest state of human wretchedness. But what was his real feeling and condition ? " Behold," he exclaims, " I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at

the right hand of God.”² And so the Lord Jesus. He is well aware that grief and trial and tribulation are the lot of many of his own people. But he sees also the heavens opened, and the earth receding:—earth receding, with all its load of sin and misery; and the heavens opening with all the glory which is to be revealed:—and therefore he says, *Blessed are they that have believed*; for there shall be a performance of those things which were spoken of the Lord.

These are the thoughts which may animate the faithful disciple of Christ under all the trials and difficulties of his earthly warfare. His Lord, who knew them all, has pronounced him *blessed*. And he is blessed. Blessed now in the favour and support of Almighty God: and—what is alone important in the sight of infinite wisdom—blessed for eternity.

One thing only remains: but it is all important. Have we believed? *Not having seen, have we believed?* Not having received the promises, but “having seen them afar off, and been persuaded of them.” Let our hearts reply, and our lives prove this: that the Spirit of God may “bear witness with our spirit,” that we are “sealed by him unto the day of redemption.”

² Acts vii. 56.

LECTURE XCVI.

CHRIST APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES, AND MAKES
A PARTICULAR ADDRESS TO SIMON.

JOHN xxi. 1—17.

1. *After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias ; and on this wise shewed he himself.*

2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.*

3. *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately ; and that night they caught nothing.*

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore : but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

5. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat ? They answered him, No.*

6. *And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes*

7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.*

8. *And the other disciples came in a little ship ; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.*

9. *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.*

10. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*

11. *Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.*

12. *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*

13. *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.*

14. *This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

The time was not yet come, when the apostles were to enter upon the work intended for them. For employment and for subsistence, they had recourse to their former avocation, till “the promise of the Father” was sent upon them, and they were “endued with power from on high.”¹

Whilst thus engaged, their Lord appeared to them for *the third time after that he was risen from the dead*. First, he had been seen by them on the evening of his resurrection. Then after eight days had passed, he satisfied the doubts of his unbelieving disciple Thomas. And now he stands on the shore near which they were labouring: *but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus*.

His address is familiar and gracious. *Children, have ye any meat?* May not this remind us, that he is interested in the circumstances and wants of his disciples? May it not justify St. Paul’s assur-

¹ Luke xxiv. 49.

ance, “ My God shall supply all your need ; “ Be careful for nothing ? ” ²

At his command they cast their net once more : and the success was like that which had astonished Simon Peter three years before, and first displayed to him the power in which Jesus came. ³

Here also was a lesson for them in their future vocation as “ fishers of men.” They might toil long, and take nothing : yet in the end receive an ample recompense. It was a significant emblem of that company which shortly after gladly received the word of Peter, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus : “ and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” ⁴

At once they recognise the author of their unexpected success, who had thus provided for their wants until the predetermined time, “ the day of Pentecost, was fully come.” John, *that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.*

15. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16. *He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

17. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me ? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

² Phil. iv. 19, and 6. ³ Luke v. 1—11. ⁴ Acts ii. 41.

The apostle who is thus pointedly addressed, had always shown a ready and forward zeal towards his Master. "Lord," he had said, "I will lay down my life for thy sake." "I am ready to go with thee both to prison and to death." "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."^b Our Lord now intimates, that his love and zeal will hereafter be put to the test, and have full scope for their exercise. *Simon, lovest thou me? Lovest thou me more than others? More than these thy companions? Hitherto there has been no proof of this, except thy ready professions: for when "all the disciples forsook me and fled," thou didst not remain at my side: yea, with an oath didst thou affirm, thou "knewest not the man." If, however, thou lovest me, behold the way in which it may be shown. Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep.*

It was the purpose of our Lord, in taking our nature, to gather a flock out of the wilderness of this world, and bring them to everlasting life. He foresees the time, when there should be such a flock: a flock of every age, and of various degrees of strength: young and old, learned and unlearned, weak in the faith and strong in the faith. And these he bequeaths to the care of his zealous follower: and after him, to all who shall be partakers of the same love. *Feed my lambs.* Fulfil the prophecy which went forth concerning me,—“He shall gather the lambs into his bosom.” *Feed my sheep.* Let it not be said to thy reproach,

^b ch. xiii. 37; Luke xxii. 33; Matt. xxvi. 33.

“My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.”⁶ Feed them with that word “which giveth understanding unto the simple.” Lead them into “green pastures, and bring them forth beside the waters of comfort.”⁷

Described in the language of poetry, to feed the flock of Christ appears to be a task full of gratification and interest. When we descend into real life, the face of the picture is changed. It is to instruct the ignorant, to direct the rude, to reclaim the wayward, to guide those who are unaccustomed to the yoke. It is to overcome the allurements of ease, and undertake laborious duty: it is to leave the abodes of comfort, and to visit the dwellings of poverty: it is to become acquainted with vice, and pain, and indigence, and sickness, and sorrow. What can impel to this? And what maintain it, as a regular course of action? Our Lord here suggests the motive, the only motive. *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.* Is it an irksome duty? Does it bring more reproach than credit? More toil than gratitude? Yet it is the will of him whom thou lovest, that his flock should be watched and provided for; reclaimed when wandering, and enlarged when failing. And he whose love constrains thee, even he “pleased not himself;” he set the example of that self-denial to which he

⁶ Ezek. xxxiv. 6.⁷ Ps. xxiii. 2.

invites his disciples : when, because “all were dead, he died for all ;” and now expects “those who live,” who are raised to spiritual life through the atonement which he made, to “live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”

This is the thought which animates the Christian, and repays his labour and self-denial. He to whom he owes *himself* :—owes all he is, and all he hopes to be : he approves, nay, requires this return of love. It is acceptable service to him, when the purposes of his coming are furthered and promoted : when the young are fed with the “sincere milk of the word,” and nurtured in the fear of the Lord : when the spiritual need of all is supplied, according to their circumstances ; when the careless are warned, the weak-hearted raised, the ignorant instructed, the faithful encouraged and consoled.

Let all then apply to themselves the inquiry which the Lord applied to Simon. Lovest thou the Redeemer ?

All are not called to show their love as the apostles did, or as those are required to do who have succeeded to their ministry. But all are bound to examine their own hearts, according to the same principle ; and to see that the habits of their life would justify them in answering with the apostle, *Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee.*

LECTURE XCVII.

CHRIST DELIVERS A PROPHECY CONCERNING
SIMON'S DEATH AND JOHN'S PROTRACTED
LIFE.

JOHN XXI. 18—25.

In the farewell address to his apostle Simon, which we were lately reading, the Lord had given him a duty to discharge. He had required him to supply his flock with spiritual provision. *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep.* To the performance of a laborious duty, men are commonly excited by the promise or prospect of reward. The reward which Christ holds out to Peter is, that he shall die a martyr's death.

18. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.*

19. *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.* ¹ *And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

The apostle was not dismayed at the prospect. He ventured all upon his confidence in his Master's

¹ The writers of ecclesiastical history relate that Peter suffered death by crucifixion under the reign of Nero.

power and faithfulness. He obeyed the command, *Follow me*. He followed the example which he had seen, and the precepts which he had heard. He followed Christ, in zeal towards God and affection towards man. And, at last, he made good his original promise, and followed him “to prison and to death,” even as the Lord had showed him.² Thus he set his seal to his own testimony, that he knew what he was trusting, and what he was encouraging them to pursue, when he “made known unto them the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³ And as he was not slow in obeying the command, so neither will the promise fail: “Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”⁴

20. *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?*

21. *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

22. *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*

24. *This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony true.*

25. *And there are also many other things which Jesus*

² 2 Pet. i. 14.

³ Ibid. 16.

⁴ Matt. xix. 28.

did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Here, as on other occasions, our Lord represses all heedless and unprofitable inquiries. When “one said unto him, Lord, Are there few that shall be saved? he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”⁵ Again, when “the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?” he turns aside the question, and replies, “Take heed that no man deceive you.” “Watch; for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come.”⁶

No doubt, however, his words here seemed to intimate that the life of John should be prolonged to a distant period; to that period, which they who were “first called Christians” expected to be the end of the present dispensation. And it was so ordered. *The disciple whom Jesus loved* did tarry upon earth, till that first coming of the Lord, which fulfilled his prophetic declarations; *i. e.* till his kingdom was established “with power,”⁷ till the vineyard was taken from “those wicked husbandmen” who had made no return to their lord, and was “given to others.”⁸ He was one who lived to verify the assurance, that “this generation should not pass, till all be fulfilled.”⁹

Yet how prone are men to put an interpretation on the words of Scripture, which goes beyond their

⁵ Luke xiii. 23.

⁶ Matt xxiv. 3, and 42.

⁷ Mark ix. 1.

⁸ Luke xx. 16.

⁹ Matt. xxiv. 34.

real meaning! *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.*

So careful should we be to examine into the justice of traditional opinions, and see that they stand upon a firm foundation. In every age there has been a disposition to receive religious notions and sentiments from the prevailing belief, rather than from the fountain-head of truth. Perhaps this early error is recorded to warn later ages against the danger of similar evils: and to show us, as it is here shown, the remedy. The remedy, the security, is to apply at once “to the law and to the testimony.” How is it written? *Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Our business is with what is plainly and authoritatively declared. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”¹

The Evangelist concludes by saying that the providential care of God had watched over the records of the life and ministry of Jesus, and directed that nothing superfluous should be preserved, nothing important omitted. Had all *the things which Jesus did*, all the signs of power which he gave, all the prayers which he offered, all the discourses which he uttered, been handed down in writing, *the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.* Certainly the world could not receive them, to any profitable purpose. The

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

simple would have been bewildered, and the learned overburthened. “But these are written,” as he had said before, “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God : and that believing, ye might have life through his name.”²

These are written, *that ye might believe*. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is the beginning ; but who shall describe the end ? That believing, *ye might have life through his name*. Might have that life here, which deserves to be called life ; when the soul which actuates the man, is itself actuated by God, directed by his Spirit : and might have that life hereafter, which man must come to, before he can justly conceive or duly prize it ; but which those to whom the most has been revealed of its nature, have been the most afraid of forfeiting, most eager to secure by the practice of their lives, or, if needful, by the constancy of their deaths.

And of that everlasting happiness it may form some share, to know those things which here cannot be known : those which the present world could not contain or receive : but which may be the grateful contemplation through eternity, of that “great multitude, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,”³ who have been delivered by them from this present evil world, and brought to “know the only true God,” through “Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” The secrets of redemption, we are assured, are a wonder even to beings who are not individually concerned in “the

² ch. xx. 31.

³ Rev. vii. 9.

JOHN XXI. 18—25.

mystery of godliness.” “These things the angels desire to look into.”⁴ How astonishing will all that relates to that hidden mystery,⁵ all *the things which Jesus did*, appear to those who have been thus “brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God !”

Let every individual make it sure that such is his own case. Let us not be satisfied, till by self-inquiry, and reflection, and prayer, by comparing our lives and our thoughts with the word of God, we can render it plain to ourselves that we are amongst those who “believe in Jesus Christ, and have life through his name.”

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 12.

⁵ See Eph. iii. 5 and 9.

THE END.

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